

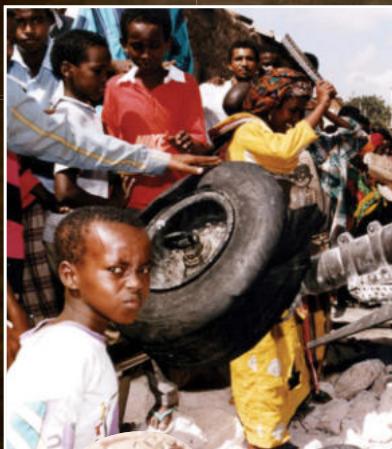
BLACKBURN BUCCANEER: BRITAIN'S GULF WAR STRIKE JET

# HISTORY of WAR



## HITLER'S ATTACK DOG

OTTO SKORZENY: THE MOST  
DANGEROUS MAN IN EUROPE



### LAST STAND OF THE SAMURAI

Die-hard heroism or  
blundering rebellion?

## THE REAL BLACK HAWK DOWN

THE TRUE STORY OF SAVAGERY AND SURVIVAL  
IN THE MADNESS OF MOGADISHU



### TRENCH WARFARE

BLOOD, MUD AND THE  
TACTICS OF ATTRITION



### SOVIETS VS TALIBAN

ORIGINS OF RESISTANCE AND  
ANARCHY IN AFGHANISTAN



### CLASH OF KOREAS

DISCOVER THE SECRET BORDER  
BATTLES OF THE NEVER-ENDING WAR



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ISSUE 023



# World War I



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1 Piece Set



1 Piece Set



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# Welcome

**“It seemed like everybody had a gun... there were children and women running around the crash site carrying AKs”**

—Lt Col Tom DiTomasso (ret), US Army Rangers

**T**he chaos and confusion of a battle is something that, as historical observers, we rarely experience and can only try our best to comprehend.

First-hand accounts of war are always the most captivating and humbling, so this issue we were privileged to speak with Tom DiTomasso, veteran of the Battle of Mogadishu. In our Great Battles feature, he shares his experience of the real *Black Hawk Down*, without the Hollywood gloss.

There's arguably plenty of facts glossed over in the BBC's *The Last Kingdom*. Thankfully, Edoardo Albert is on hand to bring us the next best thing to a first-hand

account of Anglo-Saxon battlefields, as well as to better acquaint us with England's fabled axe warriors: the mighty housecarls.



*Tim*

**Tim Williamson**  
Editor



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## CONTRIBUTORS



### EDOARDO ALBERT

Who were the legendary axe warriors we can see hacking and slashing in the *Bayeux Tapestry*? This issue, Edoardo uncovers the men behind the beards, and separates the facts from the myths of these famed Anglo-Saxon fighters (page 38).



### NICK SOLDINGER

Churchill's would-be assassin? Mussolini's saviour? Eva Perón's lover? The facts of Otto Skorzeny's career are nearly as unbelievable as the wild rumours. Nick introduces 'the most dangerous man in Europe' on page 46.



### LEIGH NEVILLE

For this issue's cover feature, Leigh sat down with US Army veteran Tom DiTomasso. Get his first-hand account of the real *Black Hawk Down* and his incredible story of survival on the streets of the USA's most infamous military operation on page 26.

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*A US Marine Light Armored Reconnaissance Vehicle and Italian Soldiers in a Fiat-OTO Melara Type 6614 Armored Personnel Carrier (right) guard an intersection on the 'Green Line' in Mogadishu*



# THE REAL BLACK HAWK DOWN



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Blood, mud, and more mud – take a look at how trenches have shaped battlefields for centuries

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This brutal way of fighting spawned an array of new weapons and countermeasures

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Professor William Philpott of UCL discusses how and why this devastating strategy emerged

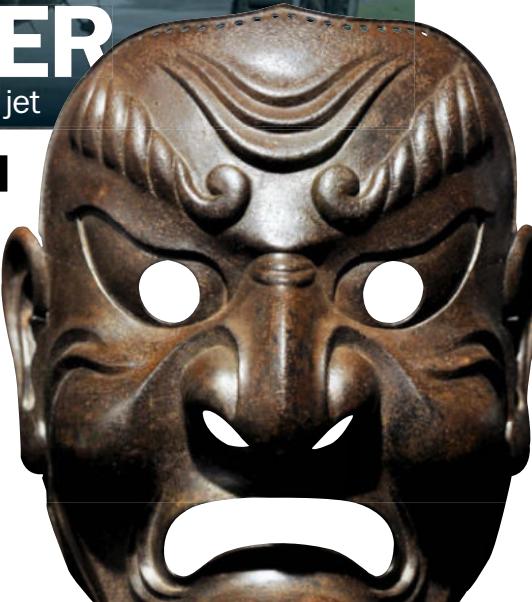
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## THE LAST SAMURAI

54 Modernity and tradition slug it out during the ill-fated Satsuma Rebellion





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Edoardo Albert returns to unpack some of the myths surrounding the housecarls

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Find out just why Otto Skorzeny was once called 'the most dangerous man in Europe'

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Sweden's troubled king commissioned this exquisite suit, but did it really protect him?



## Clash of Koreas

**76** Follow the never-ending war between north and south

# WAR in FOCUS

## FIRE IN THE HOLE!

Taken 30 January 2014

US soldiers from the 2nd Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment, crouch while firing a long-range 120mm mortar during an exercise at Camp Roberts, California.

The original 2nd Battalion was involved in heavy fighting during D-Day, as well as the Battle for Brest and Battle of Hurtgen Forest. After the war, the battalion was disbanded until 1974.





# WAR in FOCUS

## THE DEFENCE OF CHAMPIGNY

*Painted 1879*

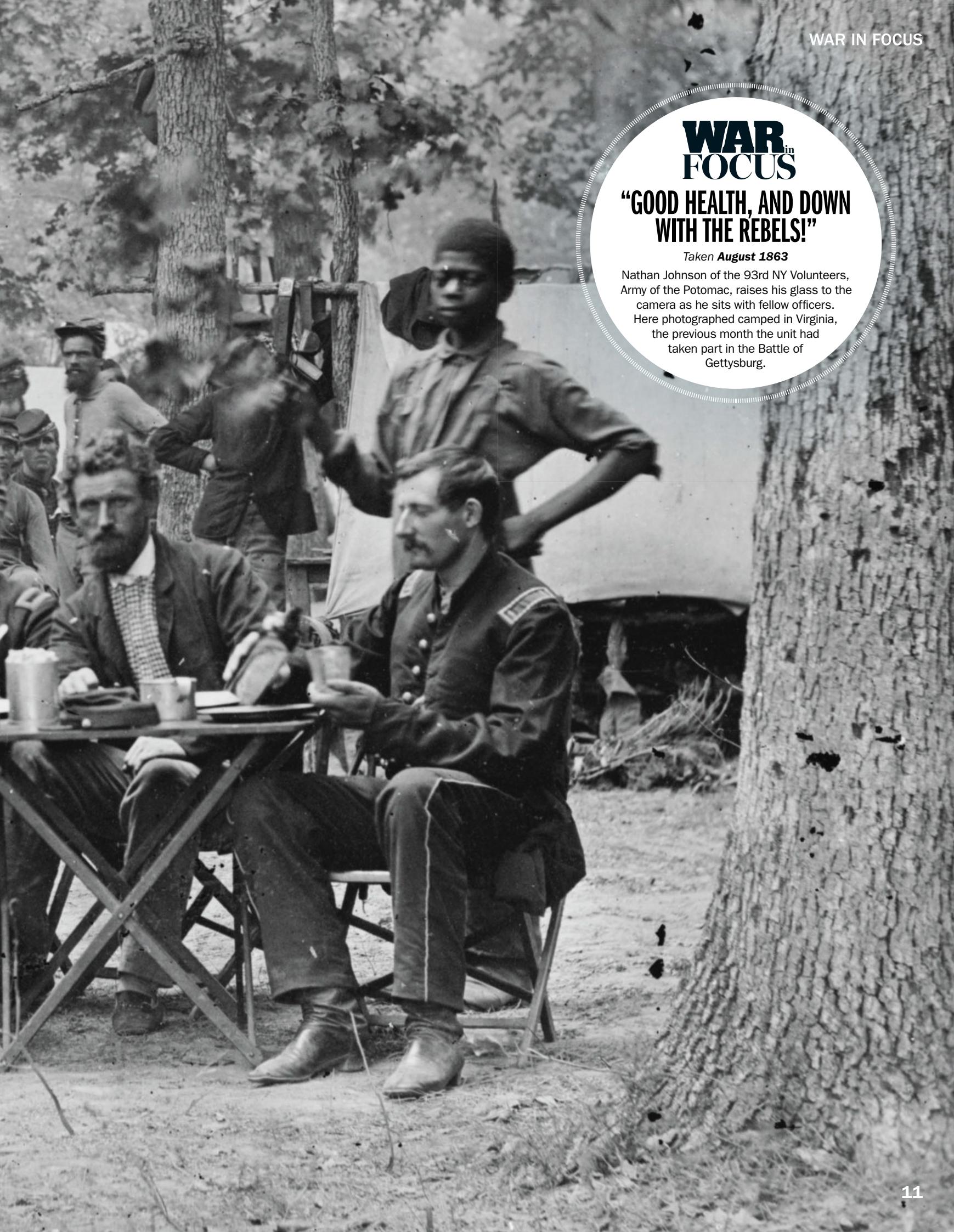
This dramatic scene by Édouard Detaille depicts French forces preparing to defend the commune of Champigny-sur-Marne from advancing Prussian and German troops during the Franco-Prussian War, December 1870.

To the left of the scene you can see soldiers hacking holes in the wall, for cannons to be placed in the defences.









# WAR in FOCUS

## "GOOD HEALTH, AND DOWN WITH THE REBELS!"

*Taken August 1863*

Nathan Johnson of the 93rd NY Volunteers, Army of the Potomac, raises his glass to the camera as he sits with fellow officers. Here photographed camped in Virginia, the previous month the unit had taken part in the Battle of Gettysburg.

# TRENCH WARFARE

These complex structures have scarred the ground in countless conflicts long before and after World War I



## BATTLE OF OHAEWAI

ENTRENCHED MAORI REBELS MAKE THE BRITISH SUFFER

1845 New Zealand

During the Flagstaff War, the British suffered heavy casualties while attacking Maori hill forts called 'pa'. These consisted of wooden palisades mounting cannon surrounded by ditches, bunkers and trenches. At Ohaeawai, the British were forced to make a frontal attack on the pa, suffering 100 casualties in just five minutes.



## SIEGE OF PORT ARTHUR

BITTER FIGHTING IN MANCHURIA SEES THE BIRTH OF MODERN TRENCH WARFARE

1904-05 China

The Japanese initially relied on disastrous frontal assaults against Russian positions, but fast-firing heavy artillery, barbed wire, machine guns and modern bolt-action rifles took a horrific toll. Almost 60,000 Japanese troops died taking the Russian-held port in a battle that foreshadowed the horrors of the Western Front.

*Left: Russian soldiers stand over a trench filled with Japanese corpses in 1905 at Port Arthur*

## SIEGE OF PETERSBURG

THE LAST GASP OF THE CONFEDERACY RELIES ON TRENCHES

1864-65 Petersburg, Virginia, CSA

As the tide of the civil war turned against the Rebels, a series of vicious sieges began, with Vicksburg, Atlanta and Petersburg seeing bitter fighting. At Petersburg, more than ten miles of trenches were dug around the city to fend off Union attacks. Even with massive artillery bombardments and the detonation of huge mines, it was the Union's numerical superiority that finally won the day.



## HOLDING THE HINDENBURG LINE

THIS FORTIFIED FRONTLINE HELD BACK THE ALLIES FOR A YEAR

1917-18 Northern France

In Spring 1917, the German army withdrew to a strong new line of defences on the Western Front. The new line allowed them to defend with fewer men and site their fortifications in the best positions. Catching the Allies off guard, the German withdrawal hampered the planned Allied offensive.

*Below: An aerial view of the Hindenburg line at Bullecourt*





Men dig an anti-tank ditch during the Battle of Berlin

## BATTLE FOR BERLIN

### LAST DITCH FANATICAL FIGHTING HOLDS THE SOVIETS AT BAY

April-May 1945 Germany

As the Red Army closed in from the east, Hitler's government set thousands of civilians to work digging defensive ditches and trench systems. Manned by the remnants of the Wehrmacht and the Volkssturm, they held off the Soviet attacks on the Seelow Heights and in Berlin itself for more than two weeks.

## IRAQ-IRAN WAR

SADDAM HUSSEIN'S ILL-FATED INVASION OF IRAN LED TO BLOODY STALEMATE 1980-88

### Iraq-Iran Border

Following Iraq's failed invasion into Iran in 1980, the conflict descended into a decade-long border war in which trench fortifications became key. The lessons of earlier wars had not been learned and human wave attacks and bayonet charges floundered in the face of machine guns, barbed wire and chemical weapons.

Right: Iraqi troops survey bodies in a trench in 1984



**"THE CONFLICT DESCENDED INTO A DECADE-LONG BORDER WAR IN WHICH TRENCH FORTIFICATIONS BECAME KEY"**



Combat Outpost Sangar, Zabul, Afghanistan, on 22 November 2009

## AFGHANISTAN

### NATO FORWARD BASES COME UNDER TALIBAN SIEGE

2009-14 Afghanistan

In the face of renewed insurgency from the Taliban, British and American forces built fortified forward operating bases to patrol from. Encircled with wire, ditches and 'Sangars' (bunkers), these bases came under constant rocket and mortar attack with some being overwhelmed.

## 5 Facts about TRENCH WARFARE

### FROM THE MOUNTAINS TO THE SEA

By the end of 1914, the trenches extended almost 450 miles from Nieuwpoort in Belgium to the Swiss border. Thousands of miles of frontline, communications and support trenches were built by both sides during the war.

### DEFENCE IN DEPTH

As occupiers, the Germans built their trenches to last, with deep dugouts that could shelter up to 25 men. Buried up to ten metres below the surface, some had electric lighting and running water.



### KEEP YOUR HEAD DOWN

During World War I, British battalions entering stretches of trenches that had been dug by Gurkha battalions often found that the trenches were too shallow due to the ferocious Nepalese soldiers' small statures.

### LINES OF TORRES VEDRAS

In the Peninsular War, the Duke of Wellington's troops were forced to retreat to Portugal's capital Lisbon. Wellington built three formidable defensive lines in the hills and confounded the French, forcing them to retreat to Spain.

### GAS! GAS! GAS!

The Germans were the first to use deadly gas, but Britain deployed it at the Battle of Loos giving it the codename 'The Accessory' to keep its use secret from enemy spies.



Images: Alamy

# TRENCH HEROES

Throughout the ages, networks of trench fortifications have been cleverly built, steadfastly defended and bravely assaulted



A marshal of France, Vauban revolutionised the concept of trench warfare, commanding many successful sieges

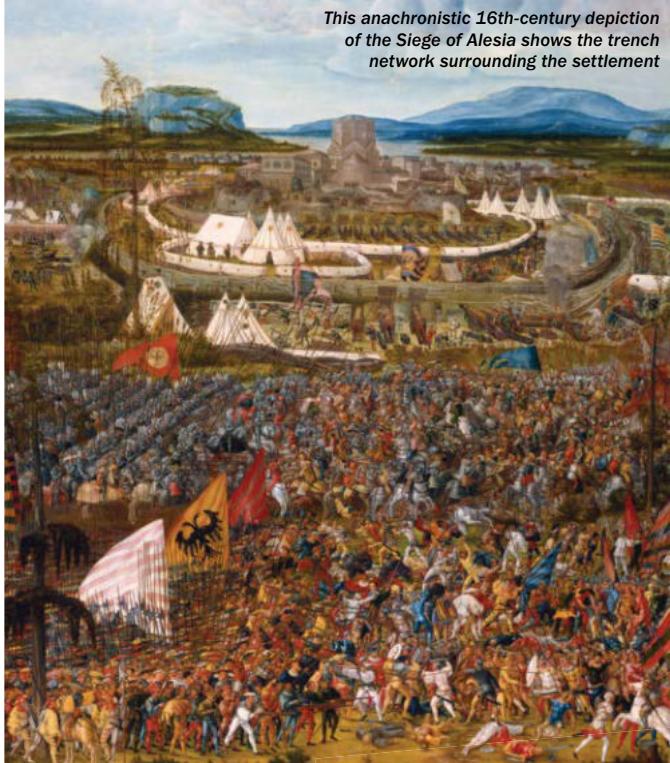
## SEBASTIEN LE PRESTRE DE VAUBAN

YEARS ACTIVE: 1650-1707

Born of minor nobility in 1633 before becoming a poverty-stricken orphan, Vauban's meteoric rise to become the greatest military engineer of his age is breathtaking. Throughout a career that saw him fight in every war of Louis XIV's reign (1643-1715), Vauban revolutionised the art of siege craft and defensive fortifications. The very idea of using progressively extending trenches, largely to assault forts, can be attributed to him.

Between 1667 and 1707, Vauban upgraded more than 300 city fortifications across France, as well as strengthening military harbours. Due to his expertise, Vauban regularly found himself in command of critical sieges, including the storming of forts in Rheinberg, Nijmegen and Maastricht. From 1676-78, he took a further seven cities.

It was during this period of incredible success that Vauban finalised his tactics on trench warfare, a contribution that was still in use in the 20th century, most notably during World War I, as the preferred method of taking defences.



This anachronistic 16th-century depiction of the Siege of Alesia shows the trench network surrounding the settlement

## JULIUS CAESAR

ROMAN ARMY

YEARS ACTIVE: 69 BCE - 44 BCE

In September 52 BCE, Caesar's rampaging Roman armies were on the verge of finally defeating the Gauls. Only the fort Alesia stood between them and victory. Realising that the garrison town of 80,000 men would be virtually impregnable to assault, Caesar decided that he would lay siege and starve the Gauls into submission.

In order to achieve this, Caesar ordered the construction of a series of trenches and forts, known as a circumvallation, to encircle the town.

When a raiding party of Gaulic cavalry breached the cordon before its completion, Caesar responded with the construction of a second line of defences, diverting a river to fill a 20-foot deep trench. With his troops positioned between the two lines, Caesar was perfectly placed to repel both internal assaults from within the town as well as the inevitable relief force. Vercingetorix, the leader of the besieged Gauls, swiftly surrendered. Gaul had finally fallen.

## MAJOR GENERAL JOHN GRUBB PARKE

UNION ARMY IX CORPS

YEARS ACTIVE: 1849-90

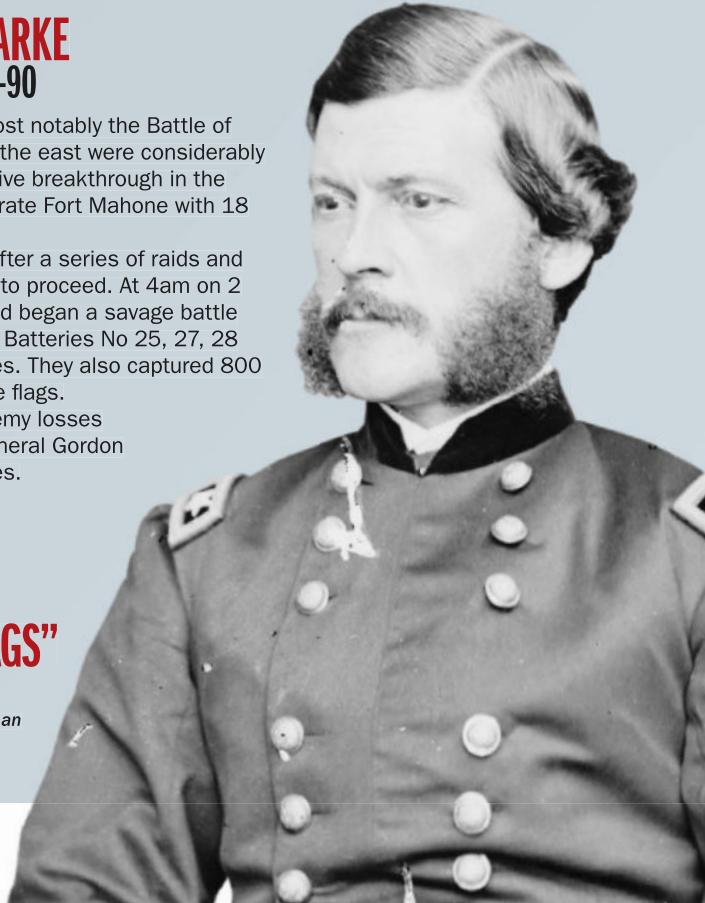
Following the fierce fighting west of Petersburg, most notably the Battle of Five Forks, the Confederate divisions stationed to the east were considerably depleted. Spotting an opportunity to make a decisive breakthrough in the stalemate, Parke prepared to assault the Confederate Fort Mahone with 18 regiments of the Union Army's IX Corps.

Despite initially hoping to postpone the attack after a series of raids and artillery fire had alerted the enemy, Parke decided to proceed. At 4am on 2 April, Parke's men rushed through the shadows and began a savage battle that would ultimately result in the Unionists taking Batteries No 25, 27, 28 and 29 (Fort Mahone) and the surrounding trenches. They also captured 800 prisoners, 12 guns and a collection of Confederate flags.

By nightfall, 1,500 Unionists lay dead, while enemy losses were unknown. By 9pm that same night, Major General Gordon started a Confederate withdrawal from the trenches.

**"THEY ALSO CAPTURED 800 PRISONERS, 12 GUNS AND A COLLECTION OF CONFEDERATE FLAGS"**

*Right: Exploiting a weakness in enemy lines, Parke launched an assault that resulted in the retreat of Confederate forces*





## SIDNEY GEORGE LEWIS

EAST SURREY REGIMENT  
YEARS ACTIVE: 915-18

In August 1915, the East Surrey Regiment of the British army welcomed the youngest soldier to fight for the British

during World War I: Sidney Lewis was just 12. The following year, the then 13-year-old runaway fought at the Battle of the Somme as part of the 106th Machine Gun Company, enduring six weeks on the front line.

The youngster then saw further action, this time among the ferocious fighting at the Battle of Delville Wood, surviving a slaughter that killed or wounded more than 500,000 men.

Eventually, though, the truth caught up with him, his understandably distraught mother writing to plead for his safe return. Lewis was duly sent back to Tooting, London, but he was later awarded both the Victory Medal and the British War Medal. In 1918, Lewis re-enlisted in time to partake in the occupation of Austria, before serving in bomb disposal during World War II.

## ERWIN ROMMEL

2ND BATTALION & 9TH COMPANY, ROYAL WURTTEMBERG MOUNTAIN BATTALION  
YEARS ACTIVE: 1911-44

Rightly hailed as one of the great generals of World War II, Rommel's exploits in the trenches of France during World War I are equally as gripping. Having already received an Iron Cross Second Class for attacking several French troops armed only with his bayonet, Rommel proved his courage once more in the trenches of Argonne in January 1915.

Despite a dwindling supply of ammunition and being given an order to retreat, Rommel led a platoon more than 100 yards through a forest of barbed wire to assault French soldiers who were positioned in blockhouses. Hoping to prevent the enemy firing on his retreating

comrades, Rommel ordered an attack that earned him an Iron Cross First Class.

Rommel fought in the trenches of France for a further nine months, receiving a shrapnel wound to the leg on 29 June 1915. In September of that year, he became first lieutenant of a Mountain Battalion that consistently defeated and captured far larger forces under his guidance.



*Inset, above:*  
Rommel proved to be a courageous and cunning leader of men in World War I, constantly outfoxing and defeating larger forces

German soldiers rest during a break in the fighting at Arras in 1916

## VO NGUYEN GIAP

VIET MINH  
YEARS ACTIVE: 1942-91

The son of a committed nationalist official involved in rebellions against the French in the 1880s, it seems that Giap was born for the role he would later play in the violent expulsion of his country's oppressors.

Giap's crowning moment arrived 12 years into his military career at the Battle of Dien Bien Phu in 1954. Having kept his heavy artillery camouflaged and rotating so as to confuse the French, Giap ordered that his men dig a trench system to encircle the enemy. Then, his armies began to excavate further tunnels inwards toward the now trapped French soldiers.

A merciless onslaught soon followed. For 54 days the Viet Minh repeatedly captured new positions, annihilating the French artillery to the extent that their commander, Colonel Piroth, committed suicide with a hand grenade. His countryman duly surrendered on 7 May. The French rule of Vietnam was over.

Giap's stunning victory at Dien Bien Phu in the First Indochina War forced a complete French withdrawal from Vietnam



# ANATOMY OF A TRENCH

Overwhelming firepower forced troops on both sides of the Western Front to dig deep to survive

## REVENTMENT SHORING UP THE TRENCH'S SIDES

Revetments made from timber, gabions or sandbags strengthened the trench walls preventing the earth from collapsing inward. In sections like the Somme, it was not uncommon for human remains to inadvertently become part of the trench walls.

## TRENCH BRIDGE

Trench bridges, sometimes called traverses, offered some overhead cover from the elements and protection from enemy fire. They also provided access to allow men attacking from the reserve trenches to enter no man's land.

## DUGOUT

Dugouts began as small spaces for one or two men to sleep but quickly evolved into more sophisticated trench dwellings and command posts. The Germans were renowned for constructing large dugouts deep underground made from reinforced concrete to withstand bombardment.

## MEDIC AT WORK

Medics had to tend to all manner of wounds and illnesses; battle casualties made up only a small proportion of those treated. In 1915, a British field hospital reported that fever, trench foot and torn muscles were the most common injuries with shrapnel and gunshot wounds making up just 11 per cent of cases.

## LEATHER PICKELHAUBE HELMET, LATER REPLACED BY THE STAHLHELM

## TRENCH DRAINS: DUCKBOARDS AND SLUMPS

Drainage was essential in the clay soils of northern France and channels called 'slumps' were crucial to prevent trenches from flooding or being washed out. Slumps were often covered by duckboard walkways.

**FIRE STEP**

As the trenches became ever deeper, fire steps were needed to allow troops to fire over the parapet. Made from earth or wood, when not in action, troops would often sit or sleep on them.

**SANDBAG**

Earth-filled hessian bags were a simple defence against small arms fire offering durable protection. Early in the war, the British suffered from sandbag shortages and women at home sent homemade hand-stitched ones made from linen and bedding.

**TOOLS OF THE TRENCH****TRENCH MORTARS**

Developed during the Russo-Japanese War, trench mortars were simple but deadly. Fired from hidden pits, they could lob huge shells.

**BRITISH GAS BELL**

Often made out of old tins, gongs or bells, these alarms were rung to warn troops of gas attacks, giving them time to put on their masks.

**MP 18 SUBMACHINE GUN**

The first mass-produced submachine gun, with a 32-round snail drum, the MP 18 was deadly in the hands of German Sturmtruppen.

**TRENCH FORTIFICATIONS**

**MATERIALS:** WOOD, EARTH AND CONCRETE

**DIMENSIONS:** ON AVERAGE 3-4 METRES DEEP AND 1-2 METRES WIDE

**WHEN CONSTRUCTED:** SEPTEMBER 1914 – NOVEMBER 1918

**LOCATION:** WESTERN, EASTERN AND ITALIAN FRONTS AND GALLIPOLI LANDINGS

**DEFENSIVE FEATURES:** BARBED WIRE ENTANGLEMENTS, DITCHES, ENFILADING MACHINE GUN KILL ZONES

**ARMAMENT:** MACHINE GUNS AND TRENCH MORTARS

**BARBED WIRE DEFENCES**

Barbed wire was quickly deployed by both sides, and by 1916, attacking soldiers faced a field of wire up to 20 metres deep before reaching the enemy line. More than 1 million miles of barbed and razor wire was laid during the war.

**NO MAN'S LAND**

The distance between opposing trench lines could be as much as a mile or as little as 25 metres. The ground was churned and ravaged by shellfire into a maze of wire entanglements and shell holes where the dead were left to rot.

**EVOLUTION OF THE TRENCH: WORLD WAR I**

The use of trenches as temporary fieldworks began almost as soon as war broke out. The French dug in extensively during the Battle of the Marne but the Race to the Sea saw hundreds of miles of trench lines dug by both sides. The first trenches were simple, straight and fairly shallow. However, as stalemate set in, they became more elaborate with vast areas of interlocking defences zigzagging to minimise the damage of direct hits. Trench drainage became key in the muddy valleys of France and complex drains were dug and deep dugouts, up to ten metres below ground, became essential for surviving massive artillery bombardments.



Illustration: Thinkstock

# WEAPONS & GEAR

Trench warfare inevitably became a battle of attrition, requiring ingenious weapons to break the deadlock

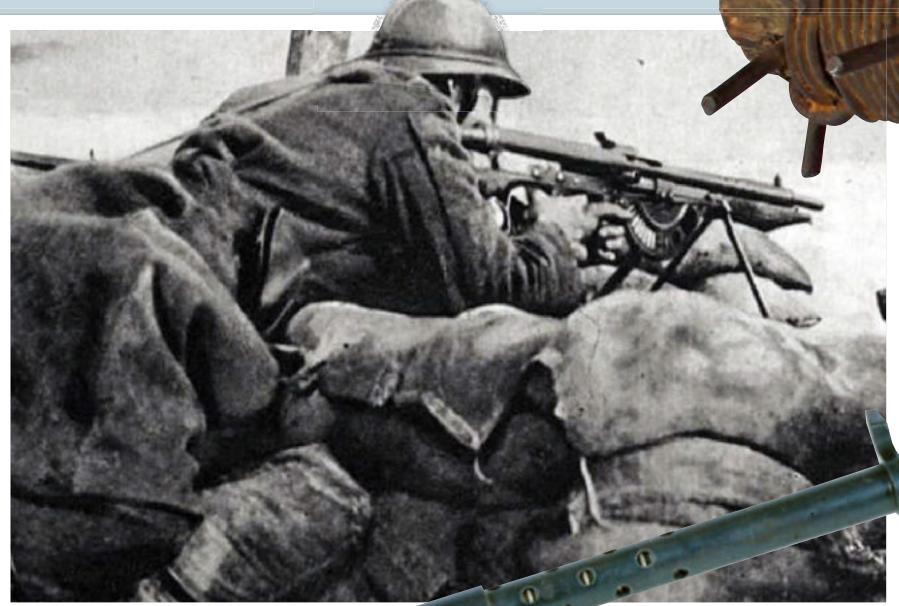
From the 18th century through to the 21st, when the stalemate of trench warfare set in, human ingenuity created a plethora of weapons and equipment to break the deadlock. These ranged from hastily built defences, like an abatis made of cut branches, to huge mortars capable of blowing a trench apart, or even a weapon as simple as a club.

## WALKING FIRE: THE CHAUCHAT

Deployed for the first time in 1916, the Chauchat automatic rifle was designed by the French to provide 'walking fire' to suppress the enemy during attacks. Though it suffered from some design and manufacture flaws, when it worked it provided valuable firepower.

### RECEIVER

This was made from cheap tube steel and metal stampings to reduce cost and production time, but when low-quality metals were used, the weapon became very unreliable.



Above: A Belgian machine gunner aims his chauchat over the top of a trench in 1918

### CHAUCHAT

**CARTRIDGE:** 8×50MMR LEBEL  
**LENGTH:** 114CM  
**WEIGHT:** 9KG/20LBS  
**FEED:** 20-ROUND DETACHABLE MAGAZINE  
**RATE OF FIRE:** 250 ROUNDS PER MINUTE  
**IN SERVICE:** 1916-32

### MAGAZINE

An open magazine allowed the operator to see how much ammunition he had left but also allowed mud to enter the gun and jam it.

### BIPOD

The Chauchat's weak non-adjustable bipod hung loosely and was often removed by French troops as it hampered movement in the mud of no man's land.

"THOUGH IT SUFFERED FROM SOME DESIGN AND MANUFACTURE FLAWS, WHEN IT WORKED IT PROVIDED VALUABLE FIREPOWER"

## CHEVAL DE FRISE

**1100-present**

Developed during the Medieval period, but similar to grouped Roman Sudis (stakes), the Cheval de Frise was made up of a wooden frame with either metal or wooden spikes. An ideal defence against horses or attacking infantry, it was used in conflicts including the Peninsular War, American Civil War, as well as both World Wars.



During World War I, Cheval de frise were used to plug gaps in barbed-wire defences

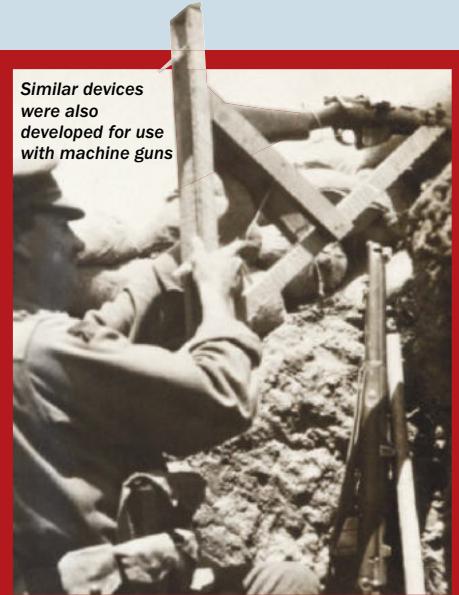


## GAS MASK

**1915-present**

Poison gas was first deployed by the Germans in April 1915 and primitive gas masks were quickly improvised from chemical-soaked pads. In June, the British introduced the hood-like PH helmet. The introduction of Mustard Gas saw rubberised canister gas masks become standard issue.

*Above, left: The PH helmet was effective protection from gas attacks until the eye piece broke*



## PERISCOPE RIFLE

**1914-18**

The dangers of looking over the parapet during World War I necessitated an ingenious new weapon – the periscope rifle. Combining periscopes with rifles allowed men to aim from inside the trench. Used by many countries during the war, they were initially simple affairs, but as the years progressed, more-complex mechanisms were developed.

## TRENCH CLUB

**1914-18**

Used during trench raids and close-quarter fighting, these vicious homemade weapons looked Medieval in their simplicity. They were made from heavy pieces of wood with nails or the casing of an empty grenade added to the end. Both sides used these fierce-looking weapons.

*Above: Trench clubs were popular during night-time raids as they were a quiet and effective weapon*

## 13-INCH SEACOAST MORTAR

**1861-64**

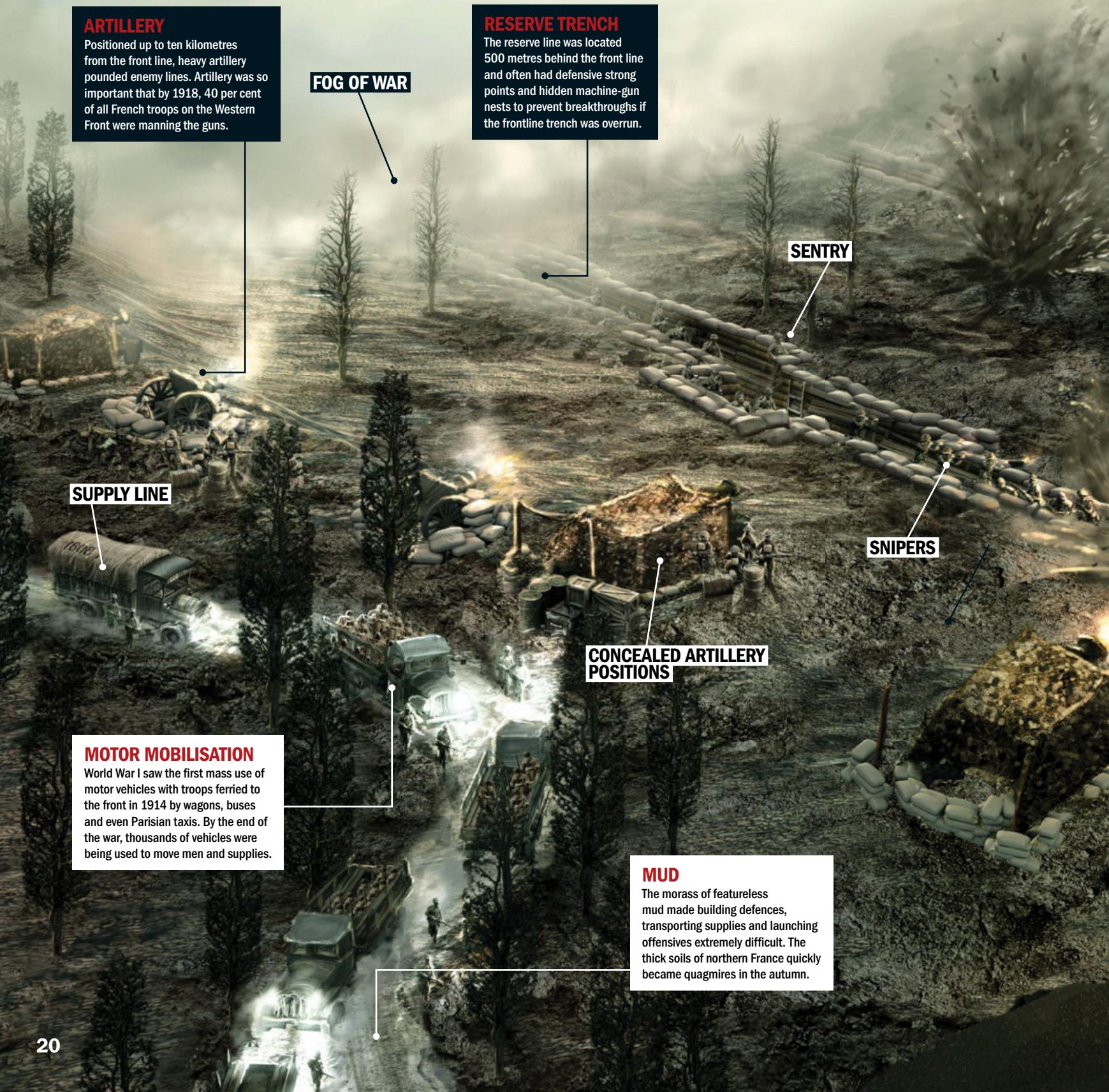
These massive mortars, weighing eight tons, could lob an explosive shell 2.4 miles. They were used by Union forces when besieging Confederate towns including Charleston, Yorktown and Petersburg. They were also the first railway-mounted artillery predating the huge super guns used during World War I.

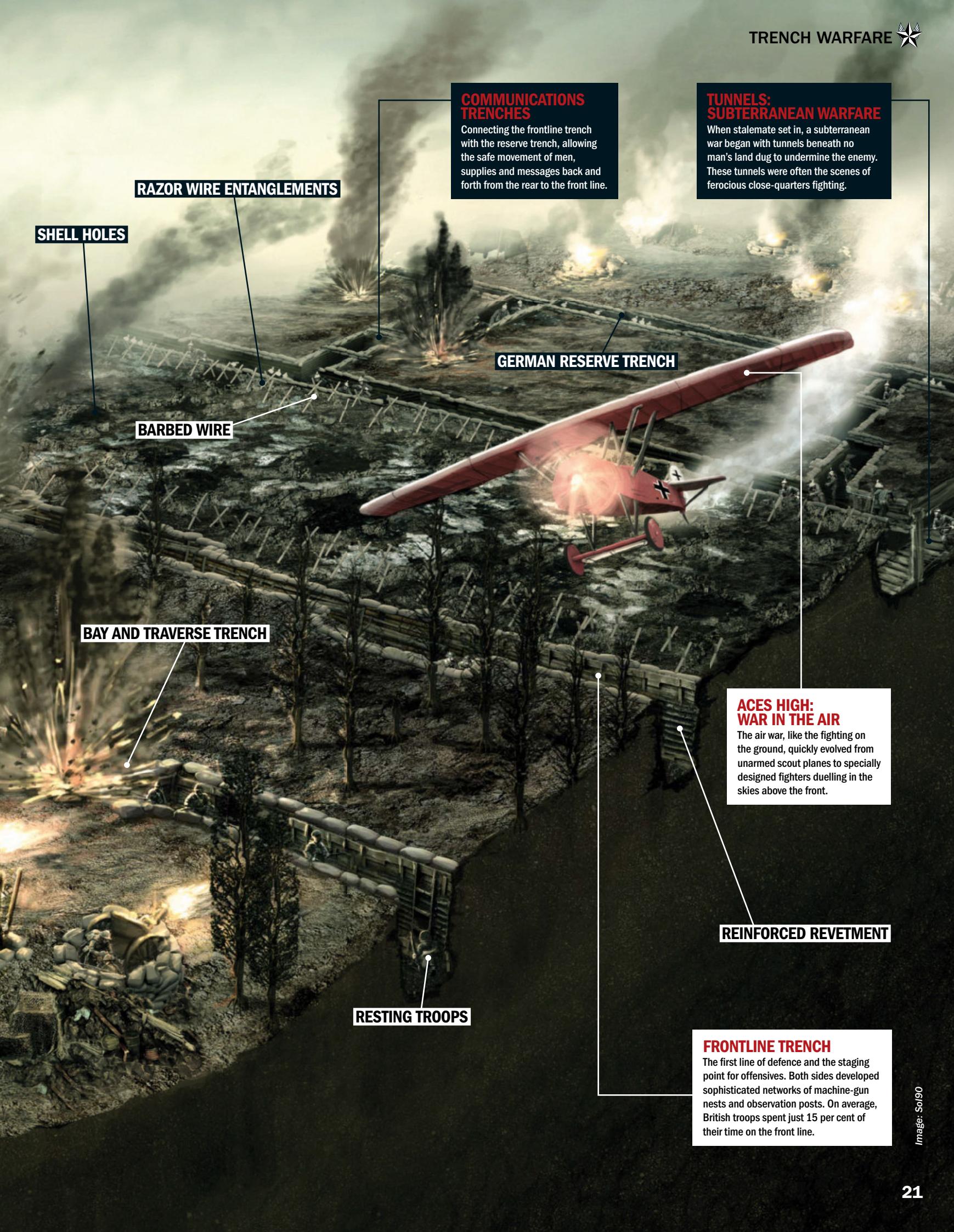
**“THESE MASSIVE MORTARS WEIGHING EIGHT TONS COULD LOB AN EXPLOSIVE SHELL 2.4 MILES”**

*Battery No.4 of the Union army, mounting 10 13-inch mortars, near Yorktown, 1862*

# WESTERN FRONT TRENCH

The prolonged stalemate of World War I saw trench warfare evolve into an art form, with complex networks of defences spanning hundreds of miles





# DIEN BIEN PHU

13 MARCH - 7 MAY 1954

54 days of trench terror  
at the doomed French  
base in Vietnam

As the war in Indochina ground on, the French decided to go on the offensive – setting up a fortified forward operating base deep in Viet Minh territory. Their aim was to interdict enemy supply lines from China in the north into Laos. It was hoped that this would lure the Viet Minh to attack the base allowing the superior French firepower to decisively defeat the communists. Instead, the base at Dien Bien Phu was besieged and systematically overrun. The surrender of Dien Bien Phu caused the French government to collapse and finally abandon Indochina.

**“THE TRENCHES WERE OFTEN SHALLOW AND MOST SECTORS HAD INSUFFICIENT OVERHEAD COVER TO PROTECT AGAINST ENEMY ARTILLERY”**

## THE FRENCH DEFENCE

DRAWN INTO A PITCHED BATTLE ON UNFAVOURABLE GROUND, FRENCH SOLDIERS DUG IN AS BEST THEY COULD, AWAITING THE VIET MINH ONSLAUGHT

The French base at Dien Bien Phu had never been intended to be an impregnable fortress, it was originally meant to be a lightly defended staging post for patrols and raids on Viet Minh supply lines. As a result, the French defences were not strong enough to hold out indefinitely.

A series of independent strong points were constructed made up of redoubts, some on raised ground like Beatrice, with mortar pits and machine-gun positions surrounded by clear fields of fire and barbed wire. However, there wasn't sufficient wire available to create deep entanglements and farm-like fencing was often used.

The trenches were often shallow and most sectors had insufficient overhead cover to protect against enemy artillery. The French artillery was effective in bringing fire onto attacking Viet Minh. Using a technique called 'Time on Target', where fire from numerous batteries was brought on the same location at the same time, they were able to halt some attacks. While these crude defences held the Viet Minh's initial human wave attacks at bay, enemy artillery and weight of numbers took a heavy toll. The French position worsened when the Monsoon season began – defences crumbled and the trenches filled with water.

French troops in their trenches take cover from the Viet Minh artillery fire



### 1. OPERATION CASTOR BEGINS 20-22 NOVEMBER 1953

4,000 crack French paratroopers begin landing at the village of Dien Bien Phu and set up a forward operating base with seven defensive strong points from which to launch aggressive patrols against Viet Minh supply lines.

### 2. THE VIET MINH STRIKE 13 MARCH 1954

50,000 Viet Minh troops occupy the hills surrounding Dien Bien Phu, digging in concealed heavy artillery. On 13 March, the Vietnamese begin a massive artillery bombardment of the base. Three massive frontal assaults are beaten back but Strongpoint Beatrice falls.

### 3. STRONGPOINT GABRIELLE FALLS 15 MARCH

French artillery is unable to make effective counter-battery fire on the skilfully dug in and concealed Viet Minh guns. Gabrielle in the north falls and the French artillery commander, despondent at his failure, commits suicide with a grenade.

### 4. VIET MINH LOSSES MOUNT 17 MARCH

General Giap's Viet Minh suffer 2,500 casualties attacking Strongpoint Anne-Marie as they are caught in French barbed wire and cut down by machine gun and artillery fire. Giap's men finally break into the French trenches and the redoubt is overrun.

### 5. BITTER TRENCH BATTLES 20-30 MARCH

French and Viet Minh troops fight back and forth through Dien Bien Phu's trench systems and 2,000 French troops are lost in five days of vicious fighting. Giap's men suffer greatly with only one doctor for the entire army.

### 6. MOUNTING LOSSES 5 APRIL

With his losses from human wave attacks mounting, Giap decides to besiege the French, digging a 100-mile network of saps that slowly encircle the base. Vietnamese anti-aircraft fire prevents the French landing sufficient supplies and reinforcements, essentially cutting them off.

### 7. SHRINKING PERIMETER 20 APRIL

Strongpoints Huguette and Dominique fall, despite valiant French counter attacks. The French perimeter systematically contracts under Viet Minh attacks, making airdrops impossible. Six kilometres to the south, Strongpoint Isabelle is also surrounded by Viet Minh trenches and starved out.

### 8. GIAP PREPARES HIS FINAL ASSAULT 1 MAY

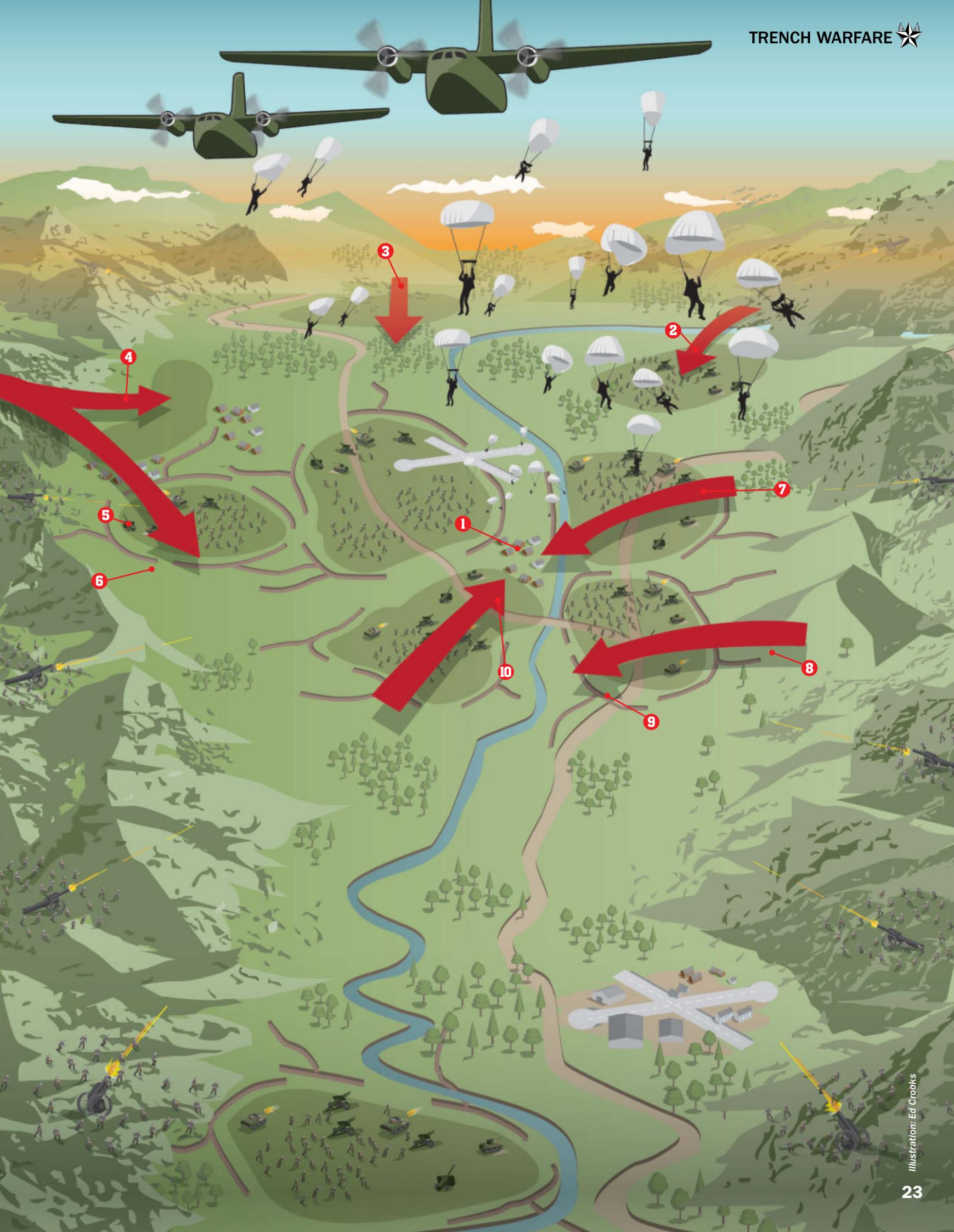
Using Soviet Katyusha rockets to bombard Strongpoint Eliane, the Viet Minh launch a massive attack on the exhausted French in their remaining trench lines, overwhelming the eastern French outposts.

### 9. FRENCH DEFENCES UNDERMINED 6 MAY

Giap detonates a 1,000-kilogram mine secretly dug under Strongpoint Eliane's Outpost 2, completely destroying it in a scene reminiscent of the huge British mines detonated during the Battle of the Somme.

### 10. LAST STAND 7 MAY

Giap launches his final assault against the few remaining French strongholds overrunning them one by one. Just 3,000 French troops face 25,000 Viet Minh. A last message is sent from the base: "The enemy has overrun us. We are blowing up everything. Vive la France!"



On 29 September 1918,  
American soldiers  
make their way to the  
Hindenburg Line

**"MORE CASUALTIES WERE SUSTAINED  
DURING THE SECOND COUNTER-ATTACK  
PHASE OF A BATTLE IN WHICH BOTH SIDES  
STRUGGLED AT CLOSE-QUARTERS FOR  
CONTROL OF THE DISPUTED TRENCH"**



# THE STRATEGY OF ATTRITION

Professor William Philpott discusses trench tactics on the Western Front

## WHAT WAS THE MAIN DIFFERENCE BETWEEN OFFENSIVE AND DEFENSIVE TRENCH WARFARE?

So-called 'trench warfare' was a short phase in a transition from pre-industrial to industrial warfare. It involved fighting for control of elaborate systems of field fortifications. Tactics evolved quickly in both attack and defence. The trenches became the battleground, while in earlier wars and sieges, field fortifications were used to deny ground to the enemy.

Tactics combined firepower with rapid infantry movement, while artillery support techniques developed to 'fire' the infantry onto their objectives. The infantry developed 'storm troop' tactics for attacking trenches as well as for counter attacks. The firepower of machine guns and artillery was also used to defend trenches. As offensive tactics improved, defensive tactics adapted, sustaining the apparent 'stalemate' of the conflict, even though the trenches and the tactics both changed substantially between 1915 and 1917.

## WHERE WAS THE LARGEST TRENCH NETWORK IN NORTHERN FRANCE?

By the end of 1914, trenches stretched from the North Sea coast of Belgium (Nieuwpoort) to the Swiss frontier. Trenches evolved from a thin line of sheltering field fortifications to deep fortified 'systems'. Each system typically comprised a forward, support and reserve trench linked by communications trenches, protected by barbed-

wire entanglements and strengthened with strongpoints and intermediate defences.

When the 1916 Allied Somme offensive showed that persistent offensive pressure could push through successive defensive systems no matter how strong, the German army constructed the Hindenburg Line to the rear of the Somme battlefield. This was composed of several trench systems protected with concrete emplacements and thick barbed wire. Such was the progress in offensive techniques that in autumn 1918, this supposedly 'impregnable' system was captured within a week.

## WAS THE HINDENBURG LINE UNIQUE?

The Hindenburg Line stretched behind the centre of the original German front, between Arras and Soissons, along which Allied offensive pressure had been concentrated in 1915 and 1916. Other large, complicated systems developed where fighting was focused: in the Ypres Salient and along the Vimy Ridge, along the Chemin des Dames Ridge, around the French fortress of Verdun, and along the Isonzo valley on the Italian front. Similar fortifications developed at Gallipoli, around Anzac Cove and at Cape Helles.

## WHERE WOULD TRENCHES BE OPTIMALLY BUILT?

Wherever possible, trenches were sited on strategic high ground. Hills allowed observation over the enemy's positions and denied observation to the enemy. This need to observe the enemy made the development of air forces essential. Consequently, trenches were sited wherever possible out of sight of the enemy, on reverse slopes or in natural hollows in the ground. Trench systems would be protected by wire and reinforced with concrete strongpoints and other fortifications. Underground dug-outs sheltered men and munitions.

## WHO BUILT AND MAINTAINED THE FORTIFICATIONS?

Divisions had integral engineer companies whose officers and men planned and laid out the defences. The hard labour would be done either by specialist pioneer battalions or infantry pressed as labourers. Labour battalions, civilians or prisoners of war could also be used.

## WHY WAS GOING 'OVER THE TOP' SO CATASTROPHIC?

Popular memory dwells on a few notorious incidents of disastrous attacks over the top, in particular on 1 July 1916. When properly managed, however, the first assault was usually the least costly phase of an attack. More casualties were sustained during the second counter-attack phase of a battle in which both sides struggled at close-quarters for control of the disputed trench.

## DID THE COMMANDERS ON BOTH SIDES SEE TRENCH WARFARE AS A STOPGAP TACTIC OR A NECESSITY?

Initially it was seen as a temporary phase before open warfare would resume. It was, although that phase lasted several years rather than months as was expected in early 1915, while the process of attrition played out.

## WAS AN ALTERNATIVE TO THE TRENCHES EVER CONSIDERED?

In 1915, amateur strategists assumed that you could bypass the trenches in the west by opening new campaigns elsewhere, but those at Gallipoli, in Italy and at Salonika quickly settled into similar stalemate owing to the power of defensive firepower. The 'solution' to trench warfare was to overmaster defensive firepower with offensive firepower. This required both the right artillery techniques and huge numbers of guns and shells, which became available during 1916. From that point, the Allies' strategic objective became 'the destruction of the German and Austrian armies' through a process of attrition, by fighting battles within the defensive systems that faced them. Inevitably, this would mean reciprocal casualties on the Allied side.

## WHEN DID THE GENERALS REALISE THAT THE STRATEGY WAS FUTILE? DID THEY EVER?

Trench warfare was a short transition phase as warfare adapted to mass and industrialisation – the outcome of deploying mass armies with modern firepower in limited space. The Western Front presented a specific but solvable military problem (in fact a complexity of tactical, operational, logistical and strategic problems). Professional generals engaged with it quickly and increasingly effectively. It took them one year to identify appropriate tactics, another to develop 'modern' operational concepts, a third to retrain their armies and a final year of intensive fighting to decide the war.

## WHAT WAS THE KEY FACTOR IN BREAKING THE TRENCH STALEMATE?

Armies developed 'combined-arms' tactics to fight within trench systems. The basic principle can be summarised in French general Pétain's phrase: "The artillery conquers, the infantry occupies." New military technologies such as tanks and aircraft would be integrated into that system. By 1917, all armies could mount set-piece battles that captured sections of the enemy's defensive system. Cumulative attrition meant that by 1918, armies were slimmed down in their infantry manpower but deployed more firepower. In that year, mobile formations of infantry supported by faster tanks, ground-attack aircraft, cavalry and mobile field artillery were fighting a prototype of the 'blitzkrieg' warfare of 1939-45.



*Below: William Philpott is professor of the History of Warfare at King's College London. He is the author of 'Bloody Victory: The Sacrifice On The Somme' (Little, Brown, 2009) and a new centenary history of World War I, 'Attrition: Fighting The First World War' (Little, Brown, 2014)*

Great Battles

WORDS LEIGH NEVILLE

# THE REAL

# BLACK

# HAWAII DOWN

What started as a simple mission to capture a Somali warlord turns into a desperate fight for survival and one of the US Army's most infamous operations

## MOGADISHU, SOMALIA

### 3 OCTOBER 1993

A single word began one of the most controversial and bloody battles involving United States special operations forces: "Irene". It was a hot and humid Sunday afternoon in Mogadishu, Somalia, now almost a quarter of a century ago, and as the code word for launch was transmitted across the secure radio frequencies of Task Force Ranger, their heavily loaded helicopters lifted laboriously into the air, their noses pointed towards the sprawling city.

On board the Little Bird and Black Hawk helicopters was an assault force of more than 60 elite Ranger light infantrymen from the 1st and 2nd Platoons of the 3rd Battalion of the 75th Ranger Regiment from Fort Benning, Georgia. Their brother Rangers in 3rd Platoon were at that moment mounting up in nine, lightly armoured HMMWVs and three five-ton trucks preparing to drive out into the city to extract the assault force.

Alongside the Rangers were the battle-hardened operators of C Squadron, 1st Special Forces Operational Detachment – Delta, or Delta Force – although its members referred to it as simply 'the Unit'. The Delta operators were superbly trained and experienced veterans that took the young Rangers, most of who were in their early 20s, under their collective wing. The Rangers in turn looked up to the operators, with their swagger and custom weapons and gear, with something akin to awe.

The Rangers and Delta operators of Task Force Ranger were targeting the leadership of Somali warlord Mohamed Farrah Aidid's Habr Gidr, one of Somalia's most powerful clans. Aidid also controlled the Somali National Alliance (SNA), a brutal militia that counted at least 1,000 armed members in the nation's capital. Aidid and the SNA had been involved in hijacking United Nations aid shipments meant to help alleviate the famine that was racking the country.

After the UN tried to impound the SNA's heavy weapons, including its technicals (pick-up trucks mounting machine guns and recoilless rifles), the SNA struck back, ambushing Pakistani peace-keepers and killing four Americans with a command-detонated mine. As the situation descended into open warfare between the Somali militias and the UN, the American ambassador and the commander of American forces deployed with the UN requested special operations assistance to capture Aidid and dismantle his organisation. The request was passed by Defense Secretary Les Aspin to the Special Operations Command, known as SOCOM.

SOCOM looked to one of its sub-commands, the secretive Joint Special Operations Command (JSOC) for options. JSOC had been established in the wake of the disaster at Desert One in Iran to command all military special operations units with counter-terrorism responsibilities. For Somalia, JSOC responded with three force options named somewhat incongruously after famous cars.

**"WE WERE GETTING  
READY TO LEAVE  
- I GET THE WORD  
'PREPARE FOR EXFIL'  
RIGHT WHEN THE BIRD  
GOT SHOT DOWN"**

- COLONEL THOMAS DITOMASSO,  
US ARMY RANGERS (RET)

*Left: Lieutenant Thomas DiTomasso in the Task Force Ranger hanger at Mogadishu Airport, with his radio operator*





# COLONEL THOMAS DITOMASSO

Colonel DiTomasso served in the army for 20 years, leading soldiers in combat and training. His assignments included the 10th Mountain Division, 1st Infantry Division and the 3rd Ranger Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment where he earned the Silver Star and Purple Heart as a member of Task Force Ranger in Mogadishu, Somalia in 1993. Some of his exploits were later depicted in the movie *Black Hawk Down*. In 1998, he was selected and assigned to the United States Army Special Operations Command at Fort Bragg.

He has taken part in multiple combat deployments to Somalia, Bosnia, Afghanistan and Iraq. During his last assignment, LTC Di Tomasso served as a Joint Special Operations Task Force commander in Iraq responsible for more than 1,200 special operations forces and government agency personnel. Selected for promotion to colonel, he holds a master's degree in Military Studies and is currently the owner of Leaders and Training LLC; a network of seasoned professionals and leaders, where he provides leadership training and operational consulting.

The smallest of these was the 'Volkswagen' option, which included a Ranger company of about 120 men, a 60-man Delta squadron and supporting helicopters from the 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment (SOAR), the famed 'Nightstalkers'. Next up in size was 'Oldsmobile', which added more Rangers and helicopters. Finally came the 'Cadillac' option, which included a flight of AC-130 Spectre gunships. In an effort to apparently limit America's footprint, Aspin selected the Volkswagen option.

## The manhunt begins

Task Force Ranger deployed to Somalia in August 1993, basing themselves in a rat-infested hanger at the decrepit Mogadishu Airport. Under the command of the highly respected Texan-born Major General William 'Bill' Garrison, a former Delta Force commander and then head of JSOC, the Task Force would use a network of informers and surveillance equipment to locate their quarry.

As they developed intelligence on the locations of the SNA leadership, the Task Force began their manhunt. Their first mission, a pre-dawn raid on a suspected SNA compound, ended in media scrutiny as their detainees were revealed to be local UN aid workers. Later missions were more fruitful, however, and the Task Force began to seriously restrict the "freedom of movement" of the SNA leadership by capturing key figures in the organisation. Aidid himself went into hiding.

To keep the enemy guessing, the Task Force altered their mission profiles – sometimes launching at night, sometimes during daylight. They also altered their infiltration and exfiltration methods – helicopters would be used to insert the assault force on one mission while trucks would be used on the next.

After six missions hunting the SNA leadership, the Task Force received intelligence from their informers that a gathering of high-ranking SNA lieutenants was planned. On Sunday 3 October, the Task Force would launch their seventh, and final, mission.

*Below: US troops broadcast messages on the streets of Kismayo, Somalia*

**"IN THE LEAD WOULD BE THE AH-6 LITTLE BIRDS, GUNSHIPS KNOWN AS 'KILLER EGGS'"**

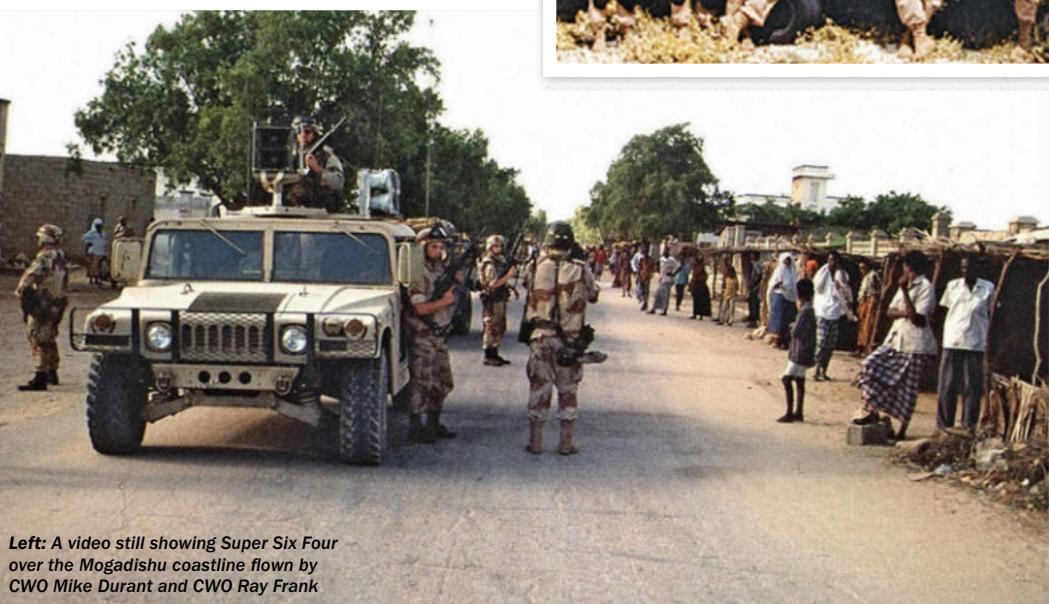
## Plan of attack

Once the targets were confirmed at the meeting, the helicopter assault force would launch on the "Irene" go-code. In the lead would be the AH-6 Little Birds, gunships known as 'Killer Eggs' or 'Six Guns' carrying 7.62mm miniguns and unguided 2.75-inch rockets. They would overfly the target, searching for any militia on the rooftops that could pose a threat to the Task Force.

Once the AH-6s gave the all clear, it would swoop four MH-6 Little Birds, the troop-carrying variant, with Delta operators perched on fold-down bench seats. These would land directly outside the target building as would two MH-60L Black Hawks bearing more Delta operators. The operators would jump off, breach into the target building and secure their targets. Finally, the Rangers in their own Black Hawks would arrive.

Veteran of the battle Tom DiTomasso – former Ranger Lieutenant now Lieutenant Colonel (retired) – recalls: "The initial assault came in with four Little Birds and two Black Hawks who brought in the primary assault force... then, probably 20 seconds later, you

*Below: The crew of Super Six Four pictured a month before the battle*



*Left: A video still showing Super Six Four over the Mogadishu coastline flown by CWO Mike Durant and CWO Ray Frank*

# US RANGERS

ARMS AND ARMOUR OF THE US ARMY'S MODERN INFANTRY



## M16A2 ASSAULT RIFLE

Standard Ranger issue, it fires a 5.56x45mm bullet in single-shot or three-round bursts from a 30-round magazine.

## RANGER BODY ARMOUR

This armour featured ceramic trauma plates covering vital organs at the front – a back plate was only introduced after Operation Gothic Serpent.



## BERETTA M9

This 15-shot, semi-automatic service pistol has been the standard-issue side arm for the US Army since its adoption in 1990.

**"THE STANDARD-ISSUE SIDE ARM FOR THE US ARMY SINCE ITS ADOPTION IN 1990"**

# SOMALI MILITIA

THE BASIC BUT DEVASTATING SHOOTERS PACKED BY THE SOMALI NATIONAL ALLIANCE

## AK47 ASSAULT RIFLE

Principal weapon of Somali militias, firing a 7.62x39mm bullet from a 30-round magazine either single shot or fully automatic.



## RPG-7 ROCKET LAUNCHER

The infamous RPG self-detonates at a distance or height of 500 metres, making it deadly to low-flying helicopters



## OPPOSING FORCES



SOMALI NATIONAL ALLIANCE  
MILITIA 1,000+  
ARMED CIVILIANS Unknown



TASK FORCE RANGER  
INFANTRY 100 Rangers, Delta operators, Air Force Special Tactics and SEALs  
HELICOPTERS  
8 x MH-60 Black Hawks, 4 x MH-6 Little Birds, 4 x AH-6 Little Birds

have the four Black Hawks come in at all four corners of the intersection near simultaneously to drop off the blocking positions."

Those blocking positions would be manned by the Rangers of 1st and 2nd Platoons, split into four Chalks of between a dozen and 15 soldiers (the term Chalk refers to the number pencilled or stencilled onto the side of an aircraft to allow soldiers to identify their ride). Each Chalk of Rangers would be deployed at a corner of the intersections surrounding the target building.

"Their job was to contain the enemy from running away from the target area and to isolate the target area from external influences – two different things: keep people in and keep people out," DiTomasso adds.

While all of this was occurring, the Rangers of 3rd Platoon in the ground convoy of HMMWVs and trucks would arrive nearby and await the signal to move forward and collect both the men who had been taken prisoner and the assault force. This ground convoy was commanded by the Ranger Battalion commander himself, Colonel Danny McKnight.

Once Delta had the prisoners secured, they would be swiftly loaded into McKnight's vehicles, the blocking positions would be collapsed, the Rangers would climb into the trucks and they would head for home. The total mission time was estimated to be between 30 and 40 minutes.

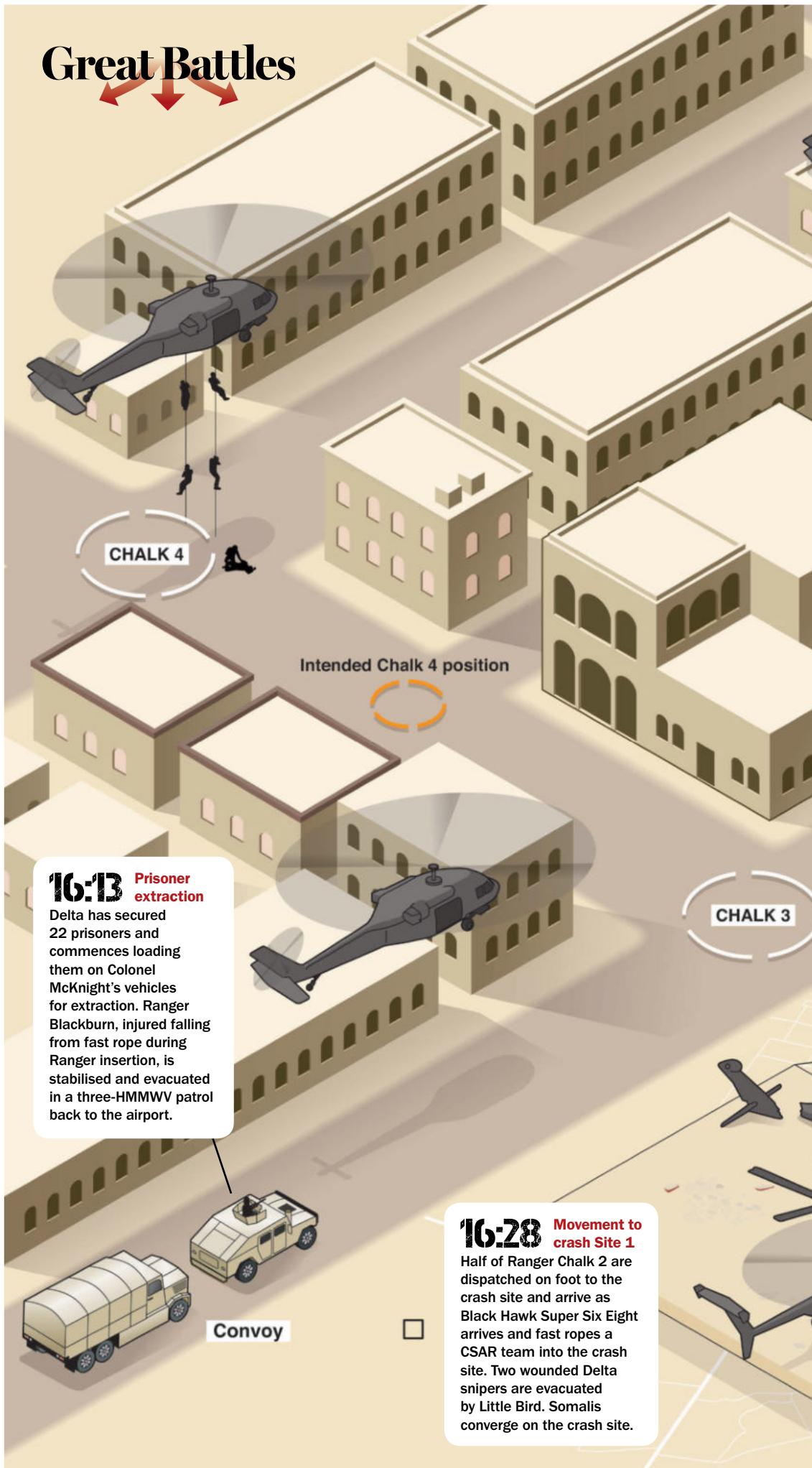
### Launch

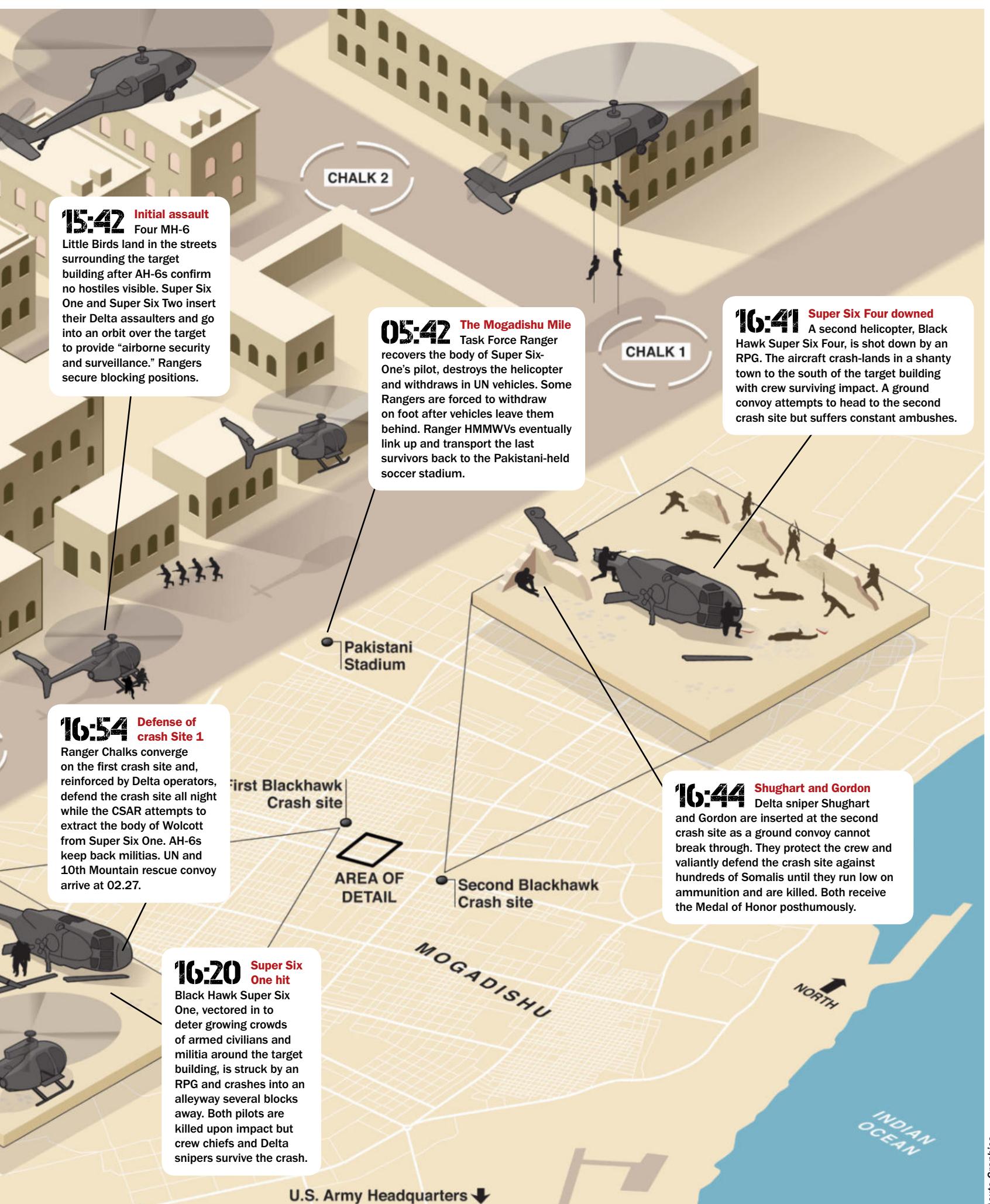
At 15.32 that afternoon, the first helicopters lifted off from the Task Force base and headed towards the city. Flight time was only three to four minutes but already they could see the militias setting fire to stacks of tires as a warning that the Americans were coming. The AH-6s cleared the landing zones and in swept the MH-6s, their rotor wash causing an immediate and all-consuming dust cloud known as a 'brownout'.

Seconds later, Black Hawks Super Six One and Two had landed their operators and were going into orbit over the objective. Each carried a small team of Delta snipers that were to provide observation and precision fire support from the air. For heavier suppressive fire, the helicopter crew chiefs manned miniguns on each aircraft.

The Black Hawks themselves were also something of a weapon – they too produced a fearsome brownout that could be used to non-lethally deter civilian mobs. "It's very uncomfortable to stand under helicopter rotor wash if you don't have any eye protection," DiTomasso explains.

**"FLIGHT TIME WAS ONLY THREE TO FOUR MINUTES BUT ALREADY THEY COULD SEE THE MILITIAS SETTING FIRE TO STACKS OF TIRES AS A WARNING THAT THE AMERICANS WERE COMING"**







Civilians gather around the crash site of one of the Black Hawk helicopters

Next in were the Ranger Black Hawks: "As we were fast roping in, I could hear rounds going off, I could hear explosions... We were a good half a block away from the target building and there was no shooting going on at the target building, all of the shooting was occurring outside at the blocking positions."

As the Rangers established their blocking positions to defend the target building, disaster struck. A Ranger, Private Todd Blackburn, fell from the fast rope, plummeting a dozen metres to the ground. The Rangers had suffered their first casualty. However, this was something that they had trained and planned for.

"When Blackburn fell, I bubbled out (detached) four of my men so we could make visual contact with Eversmann," DiTomasso recalls. "He and I waved to each other, they were evacuating Blackburn, and everything was good to go. They brought the vehicles forward and they put him in a HMMWV and made it back to the airfield." Small arms fire was increasing around their positions, however, and the smoke trails of RPGs criss-crossed the sky.

**"AS THE RANGERS ESTABLISHED THEIR BLOCKING POSITIONS TO DEFEND THE TARGET BUILDING, DISASTER STRUCK. A RANGER, PRIVATE TODD BLACKBURN, FELL FROM THE FAST ROPE"**

### Super Six One

While Blackburn was evacuated, DiTomasso's Rangers came under fire. "A bunch of drivers and bodyguards (for the captured SNA leaders) were throwing hand grenades over a wall from a garage. Me and all my guys went into the garage to fight those guys and that's when Sergeant Joe Thomas, my forward observer, was talking to Super Six One when they got shot down."

Super Six One had been struck by an RPG and crash landed into a tiny alleyway several blocks east of the target building. The helicopter's nose smashed into a building and crushed the cockpit, killing the pilots. One of the Delta snipers on board, Staff Sergeant Dan Busch, managed to crawl out and, although badly wounded, attempted to hold back the encroaching mobs with aimed fire from his rifle.

"[Thomas] was bringing them in to observe a large crowd that was building to the north of our position. When the bird got hit and spiralled down and crashed, the crowd saw it too and began running toward the bird. I split Chalk 2 in

half and took seven with me to the crash site and eight stayed to man the blocking position," remembers DiTomasso.

Up until that point, the mission had been going according to plan: "We assaulted a three-storey building and captured 22 people in less than two minutes with not a single shot fired within [that] building. We'd captured the two lieutenants that we went after that day. We were getting ready to leave – I get the word 'prepare for exfil' right when the bird got shot down."

### Securing the crash site

DiTomasso led his half of Chalk 2 to the crash site, receiving and returning fire all the way. "When we got to the crash site, a Little Bird had landed and extracted the two (wounded) snipers. When I came around the corner, I could see [one of the pilots] carrying (Delta sniper) Dan Busch and put him on that Little Bird and then the Little Bird took off." Busch sadly died on the helicopter despite the crew's courageous efforts.

"When that Little Bird took off, we ran underneath it and one of the crew chiefs (from Super Six One) was standing in the middle of the street with his hands over his face and his face was all bloody and the Somalis were beating him with sticks. We pushed all of the Somalis off that guy, grabbed on to him and we moved him to the crash site."



US infantry in Somalia as part of Operation Restore Hope, 1992  
Inset left: A US Navy MH-60L Black Hawk transporting troops

A US Marine Corps helicopter surveys a residential area in Mogadishu, Somalia



"The other crew chief was sitting against a wall and it appeared he had a back injury. Somalis were running all over the helicopter. The two pilots were still inside the helicopter and (pilot) Cliff Wolcott was trapped. We pulled Donovan Briley (Wolcott's co-pilot) out. Initially we were just fighting the Somalis, trying to get them off the helicopter." DiTomasso instructed the other half of Chalk 2 to link up with them at the crash site as quickly as possible.

### Search and rescue

Moments later, the Combat Search and Rescue (CSAR) Black Hawk, Super Six Eight, came thundering in overhead. The CSAR helicopter was equipped for just such a contingency with a 15-man mixed team of Rangers, Delta operators and Air Force Para Rescue Jumpers, or PJs – highly trained combat medics.

"It was a horrifying and pleasant surprise. I knew that the CSAR element was up there in Super Six Eight but I didn't know they were coming. At the time we were distracted by all of the enemy combatants and I was standing on the corner right near the bird and all of a sudden I couldn't breathe – literally could not take a breath. I thought I was going to pass out.

"Four guys [fell] out of the CSAR helicopter, as they fast roped down the ropes – they were getting shot and falling down right in front of me. So now you have these 15 plus the 15

that were there and you have the two pilots deceased, the two crew chiefs who were wounded, and four more wounded from the CSAR element." The helicopter itself, Super Six Eight, was struck by an RPG as it hovered to deliver the CSAR team. It limped back to base and crash landed.

Crowds of Somalis – some SNA militia, some armed civilians – surged continuously against the thin line of Rangers manning the perimeter. "It seemed like everybody had a gun... there were children and women running around the crash site carrying AKs, there were women running around with baskets of RPG rounds."

The Ranger Company commander, Captain Mike Steele, began to move the remainder of the Rangers to the crash site. They ran into resistance and began taking casualties, including 21-year-old Ranger Corporal Jamie Smith who suffered a fatal gunshot wound that severed his femoral artery.

"Chalks 1 and 3 and the rest of the assault force [had] made that move north and Jamie Smith got hit and that whole foot patrol stopped. It was like hitting a wall of lead because the crowds to your north at the crash site were shooting through the crash site and it was like grazing fire further down the road," DiTomasso explained.

"When that happened, Captain Steele and the Rangers all occupied the buildings on the

**"IT SEEMED LIKE EVERYBODY HAD A GUN... THERE WERE CHILDREN AND WOMEN RUNNING AROUND THE CRASH SITE CARRYING AKS"**

right side of the road, the east side, and the Delta Troop got on the left side and cleared from building to building all the way up and came abreast of the crash site. Now we had all those guys at the crash site as well."

### Only hope

A bad situation was about to become much worse. Black Hawk Super Six Four was struck by an RPG round and crashed to the south of the first crash site.

"I was under the first Black Hawk trying to defend it when I heard on the radio that another Black Hawk had been shot down. Initially we thought 'okay, we're going to go secure it' but we still had Cliff Wolcott trapped in the helicopter [and] we didn't have enough men to secure the crash site."

"So Super Six Two calls up on the radio to General Garrison and requests permission to

put their three Delta snipers into the crash site to defend it. Three times they called. Three times permission [was] denied. The last time they call, Master Sergeant Gary Gordon, the Delta team leader, got on the radio and called General Garrison and said 'sir, you've got to put us in.' General Garrison said 'Gary, do you know what you're asking for?' and Gary Gordon said 'yes sir, we are their only hope.'

"Shughart and Gordon jump off that bird with an M4, a modified M14 and two .45-calibre pistols. They make their way 300 metres through the neighbourhood and find the helicopter. They pulled everyone out of the Black Hawk, they put them under cover and they defend that helicopter until they run out of ammunition and are overrun by the enemy. The crowd overwhelms the crash site, they kill everybody, they grab (the pilot) Durant – he's the last one they found. An elder steps forward and says 'let's keep this one alive for negotiations' and Durant is held for 11 days as a prisoner of war."

McKnight's convoy had eventually been forced to return to base with mounting casualties and with vehicles literally being shot out from under them. At every turn they had encountered another roadblock or Somali ambush. Without GPS and with directions having to be relayed over the radio from the air, the convoy had little chance of making it to either crash site. Once back at base, McKnight wasted no time preparing to go back out into the city.

"The convoy with all of the prisoners in the HMMWVs and five-ton trucks went back to the airfield and dropped [them all] off. They loaded up all the headquarters personnel because they needed more Rangers. Those guys then kept on trying to come back out to us."

"All afternoon and into the evening we kept hearing them making contact with the enemy. They made several attempts plus they were trying to get to Durant's crash site but they just couldn't get to it because they didn't have armoured vehicles."

#### The long night

The Rangers and Delta operators at the first crash site secured the perimeter and prepared for a long night. "We pulled all the casualties in, put them in the centre of the building and defended that building. We split the defence with a Delta captain – he took the northern side, I took the southern side. He had all of

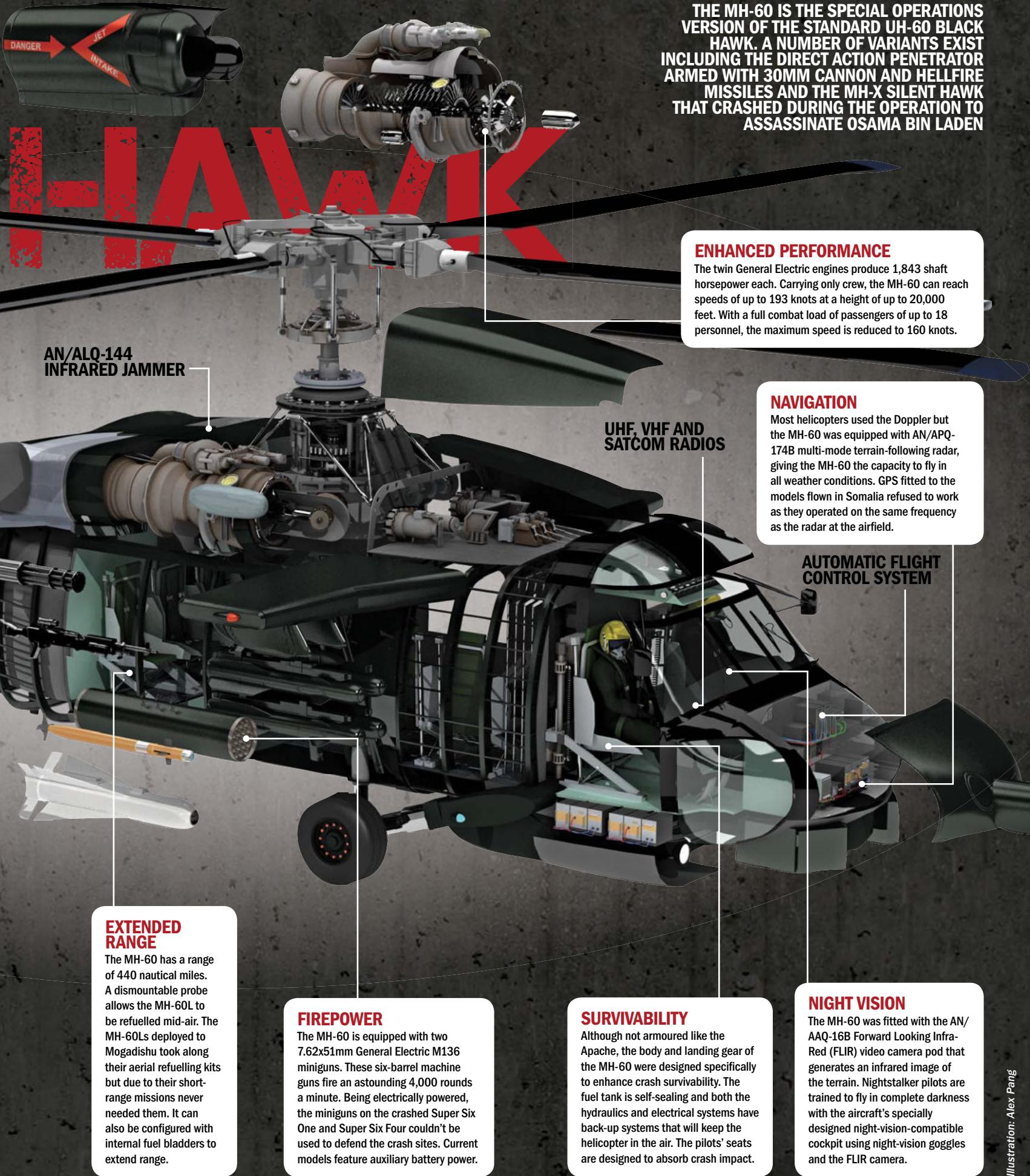
**"MCKNIGHT'S CONVOY HAD EVENTUALLY BEEN FORCED TO RETURN TO BASE WITH MOUNTING CASUALTIES AND WITH VEHICLES LITERALLY BEING SHOT OUT FROM UNDER THEM"**



**"WITHOUT GPS AND WITH DIRECTIONS HAVING TO BE RELAYED OVER THE RADIO FROM THE AIR, THE CONVOY HAD LITTLE CHANCE OF MAKING IT TO EITHER CRASH SITE"**

*Left: Soldiers fast-rope from an MH-60L Black Hawk during a night-time training exercise*

THE MH-60 IS THE SPECIAL OPERATIONS VERSION OF THE STANDARD UH-60 BLACK HAWK. A NUMBER OF VARIANTS EXIST INCLUDING THE DIRECT ACTION PENETRATOR ARMED WITH 30MM CANNON AND HELLCIRES AND THE MH-X SILENT HAWK THAT CRASHED DURING THE OPERATION TO ASSASSINATE OSAMA BIN LADEN



the CSAR guys with the special equipment so he continued to work on Cliff (Wolcott) at the helicopter. My job was to run the casualty collection point and secure the perimeter."

The Somalis continued their assault all night. The Little Birds flew continuously – eventually firing some 170,000 rounds from their miniguns and 77 2.75-inch rockets in an astounding 14 hours of combat flying.

"My forward observer was talking to the aerial fires assets, which were the AH-6s at that time and continually calling fire missions to keep the Somali gunmen off of us. They just kept attacking – if they had better command and control, if they were better organised, they might have been able to overwhelm us at that point as we were running out of ammo. They just kept attacking in threes and fours and

running at the building and climbing in through the windows."

Back at the Task Force Ranger base, negotiations with the UN continued and were able to gain access to a number of Malaysian and Pakistani armoured vehicles in order to stage a relief convoy with the American 10th Mountain Division, who were in Somalia to support humanitarian operations. Finally, at 11.23pm that night, the convoy, led by Pakistani tanks, headed toward the city and Task Force Ranger.

DiTomasso and his men could hear them advancing. "I could hear the gunfire. Literally I could hear the .50-calibre machine guns and the 40mm grenades going off. I could hear them in the distance, and then they would stop and then they'd get further away, and then

they'd get closer... The ground convoy was trying to break through."

A little more than two hours later, the UN armoured convoy arrived and the men of 10th Mountain linked up with Task Force Ranger. At dawn, the CSAR team finally managed to release the body of pilot Cliff Wolcott from the wreckage of the Black Hawk. "When Chalk 2 left the crash site at five o'clock, the Somalis started to re-attack so the commander made the decision that we will abandon the helicopter and destroy it with thermite grenades and demolition charges."

### Mogadishu Mile

"We moved from the crash site to link up with the Malaysians and Pakistanis. Captain Steele put Chalk 2 at the rear of the foot movement [although] we were the most wounded. When Chalk 2 got to the link-up point, all the vehicles were gone. The crowd kept coming so we just kept running," explains DiTomasso.

"Larry Moores, the platoon leader for 3rd Platoon, was at the Pakistani stadium looking for me. When the guys rolled in with the Malaysians and Pakistanis, Larry's saying 'where's Chalk 2?' So he took his guys, loaded them back up in their HMMWVs and drove back into the city. Basically, he saw us running down the road, he stopped, did a U-turn, we jumped on his HMMWVs and they took us to the Pakistani stadium. It was an immense feeling of sorrow, that's the best way I can describe it. It was not celebration."

### Tactical success, strategic failure

18 American soldiers were killed during Operation Gothic Serpent. 84 were wounded, some with life-altering injuries. One Malaysian was killed and seven wounded during the relief effort. Conservative estimates of Somali dead and wounded indicate more than 1,000. Five Black Hawk helicopters came under fire, three only making it to safety by luck and superb piloting.

DiTomasso is clear that he feels that Task Force Ranger succeeded in their objectives that day. "As hard as it is to say, this was a tactical success. We were never overrun, we stayed there as long as we had to [to] remove Cliff out of the helicopter and then we left and that's that." But he reserves some criticism for what could be termed strategic failings by the Clinton administration.

"We released all the prisoners we had captured, we released them all. On 2 October, the mission was important enough to the United States to have Task Force Ranger there. On 3 October, all of a sudden it wasn't that important anymore and they pulled us all out." Task Force Ranger was stood down, and even though a fresh contingent of Rangers and Delta operators were briefly sent to Somalia, the Task Force would never conduct another mission.

"The mission was a success in that we captured the two SNA lieutenants we were after. It came at great losses. The enemy got lucky that day."

Thanks to Lieutenant Colonel Thomas DiTomasso for his assistance in the preparation of this article



The body of Staff Sergeant William Cleveland is dragged through the streets of Mogadishu



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# ENGLAND'S AXE WARRIORS

The elite housecarls are surrounded by myth, but were they really the fearless fighters of legend?

WORDS EDOARDO ALBERT

Almost everyone knows 1066. But how many people know that England was conquered 50 years earlier, in 1016? The invader then was Cnut – the king now known for vainly trying to turn back the tide. His victory marked the culmination of a century and a half of Viking attacks on England. However, having conquered the country, the Danes left England pretty much as it was. Their main innovation was the introduction of a new class of warrior – the housecarl. When the Normans landed in 1066, the spine of the

army that faced William was composed of King Harold's own housecarls. In one of history's great ironies, this meant one set of Viking-derived warriors faced another: the knights of Normandy. The Normans were descendants of Vikings too, and so the battle for England had become a Viking affair.

Leading the battle on the English side, Harold's housecarls stood proud atop Senlac Hill, their shields locked in the warrior wall erected to prevent William's march into England. As the Norman knights charged up the

hill, occasionally a brave man would step out of line, wedge his shield into the earth and swing his great two-handed Dane axe. Such was its momentum that it might cut horse and mail-clad rider in two.

These soldiers had already defeated the army of Harald Hardrada of Norway, the most feared Viking king of the time. Although they'd not even had three weeks to recover from the Battle of Stamford Bridge on 25 September, the confidence born of that victory must have sustained Harold and his men on the march

south and as they formed their shieldwall. The housecarls were the elite troops of their age. Now, tested again, they would prove it.

Only, as we now know, they failed this final test. Many had fallen at Stamford Bridge, but even with their numbers depleted, they withstood William's men for a long, bloody day at Hastings – when most early-Medieval battles ended within an hour. Even when King Harold fell, most of his housecarls fought to the death.

To explain the valour and combat strength of these troops, scholars examined the records of the time to find what set them apart from the norm. The majority of Harold's army was composed of the fyrd, the muster of free men called upon to take up arms in service of their king. These were farmers and artisans, armed with spears, wearing leather jerkins and carrying shields. They were strong and brave men – you couldn't take your place in a shieldwall without bravery – but not elite soldiers. The housecarls were different.

The word, derived from Old Norse and meaning house and man or servant, first appears in English records after Cnut's victory of 1016. Contemporary records are sketchy. They were members of noble households as warriors, and on one occasion tax collectors. However, to explain how such warriors could defeat Harald and come within an hour of dusk in holding back William, scholars looked to other sources. In particular they turned to the *Lex Castrensis Sive Curie*, contained in the late-12th-century works by the first Danish historians, Sven Aggeson and Saxo Grammaticus.

**Right:** Swords with intricate decoration were also a status symbol for the housecarls

What wonderful material they found there. According to Aggeson and Grammaticus, Cnut had created a code of rules to regulate his warriors, called Witherligr in Danish. Having won the throne of England, the king paid off the majority of his army with Danegeld raised from his new subjects. One of the reasons so many people were so keen to invade England was the efficiency of its tax gatherers: Cnut raised the astonishing sum of 30,800 kilograms of silver to pay his men, and this after the English had spent the previous two decades paying increasingly large sums of Danegeld.

However, Cnut kept the crews of 40 ships to act as a standing army, paid for by a regular tax. He then promulgated a decree that any man wishing to join this warrior brotherhood must show their wealth and worth with gilded axe heads and sword hilts.

In the spirit of getting in with the new boss, as many Angles and Saxons as Danes applied to join Cnut's house men. Finding himself now king of a sea-spanning empire that encompassed England, Denmark, Norway and



Highly decorated metal helmets were a mark of a warrior's elite status

some of Sweden, Cnut had to find some way of knitting together his household troops. He did so by a law code that required the men to sit in order of precedence in his hall, with the noblest and bravest nearest the king. Infractions were punished by being sent to the end of the table, where the other housecarls might pelt the miscreant with bones and scraps.

A housecarl who offended had to be tried before the whole body of men. Even Cnut was not above the rules: when he killed a housecarl in anger, he was tried before the assembly of men. Although they acquitted him, Cnut fined himself for the crime.

Generally, the punishment for killing another housecarl was exile or death, while treason was, naturally, punishable by death and confiscation of property. In return for their service, Cnut provided his housecarls with board, lodging, entertainment and a monthly salary. Housecarls were not bound to service, but according to the *Lex Castrensis*, they could only leave their post on one day during the year: New Year's Eve. This was also the day when the king gave gifts, thus making it less likely any man would leave his service.



**"MANY HAD FALLEN AT STAMFORD BRIDGE, BUT EVEN WITH THEIR NUMBERS DEPLETED, THEY WITHSTOOD WILLIAM'S MEN FOR A LONG, BLOODY DAY AT HASTINGS – WHEN MOST EARLY-MEDIEVAL BATTLES ENDED WITHIN AN HOUR"**

## WORDS TO FIGHT BY

THE IDEALS THAT MOVED ANGLO-SAXON HOUSECARLS TO SERVE – TO THE DEATH IF REQUIRED

### LOYALTY

Loyalty was the keystone virtue for the Anglo-Saxon warrior – indeed, for the whole of Anglo-Saxon society. A housecarl was bound by oaths of loyalty to his lord. It was these oaths that fired his service and gave him the moral courage to fight on, even to death, should his lord fall. This loyalty is summed up in the Old English poem *The Battle Of Maldon*. With their lord struck down by Vikings, one of the remaining men rallied the rest with the words: "Thought must be the harder, heart the keener/Spirit shall be more – as our might lessens." Did these words run through the minds of Harold's housecarls as they fought to the end beside their king?

### COURAGE

Loyalty wasn't worth much without courage – at least not in 11th-century England. The courage celebrated in poems such as *Beowulf* was tinged with the fatalism inherent in old Anglo-Saxon paganism, and then infused with Christian hope. The courage of the housecarl was founded on the twin beliefs that defeat was no refutation and that, for the faithful warrior, there was eternal reward.

### GLORY

Fame, glory and renown was the currency of the early-Medieval warrior's life. A housecarl was bound to his lord by bonds of obligation and trust, but the glory won in battle and duels was what made a man's name and won him great renown.

### GENEROSITY

A king cemented the loyalty of his warriors – and indeed his entire kingdom – by the giving of gifts. After a successful battle, the ideal Anglo-Saxon king shared out the booty to his warriors, so much so that 'ring-giver' is a synonym for king in Anglo-Saxon poetry. This had the additional effect, though, of institutionalising warfare – the best, and sometimes singular way to acquire more gifts was to win them in battle.

### PRESTIGE

For all Anglo-Saxons, but particularly the warriors, words were vital. In what was still largely an oral culture, whose values were celebrated by the king's poet, or scop, words and stories bound a people to their origin, celebrated bravery in battle and the generosity of kings, and provided, through riddles and songs, entertainment through the long evenings. Orations and insults were an important part of the preliminaries to battle, used to bolster the courage of fellows and to sow uncertainty among the enemy.

# HOUSECARL ARMS AND ARMOUR

ARMS AND THE MAN – THE WAR GEAR THAT MADE THE HOUSECARL THE MOST-FEARED FOOT SOLDIER OF HIS TIME

**CHAIN MAIL HAUBERK**  
Chain mail was one of the greatest gifts a housecarl might receive from his lord. If a mail-clad warrior fell in battle, there would be a great struggle to strip the armour from the body. Mail was very effective protection against slashes or thrusts from swords or spears, although clubs could cause trauma without penetrating the armour.

**HELMET**  
According to the *Bayeux Tapestry*, what we think of as the Norman-style helmet was common to both armies. Only elite warriors wore metal helmets. The noseguard offered a degree of facial protection without compromising vision.

**CHAIN MAIL COIF**  
Chain mail was extremely expensive. The coif protected the head, neck and shoulders; together with a helmet and the hauberk it provided great protection to the housecarl's upper body.

**GAMBESON**  
Housecarls wore a padded, quilted jacket under the mail. This cushioned against blows from blunt weapons such as maces and warhammers, as well as providing a further layer of protection against edged weapons. Poorer warriors would have relied on just this padded jacket for defence.

**DANE AXE**  
The two-handed axe was popularised in England by Cnut and his men, so much so that in the 50 years between the Danish and Norman conquests, it became the preferred weapon of the English housecarls.

**SWORD**  
The most high-status of weapons but one that was probably not so effective in a shieldwall – it would only really come into play when a shieldwall broke and the battle turned into a general mêlée or a rout.

**VAMBRACES**  
Some warriors may have used leather vambraces to protect their forearms.

**SEAX**  
The very name 'Saxon' derives from 'seax', the all-purpose knife worn at the waist by Anglo-Saxons. It was a single-edged weapon, worn horizontally in a scabbard on the waist, with the edge pointing upwards. Generally too small to cause much damage in combat, it could have been used to finish off a prone enemy.

**JAVELINS**  
A preliminary to battle would likely have seen an exchange of javelins, with the men at the rear of the shieldwall launching missiles at the enemy. A well-thrown javelin could penetrate a shield, but even if it did not, embedded into a shield its weight would drag the shield downward, exposing the man holding it to further attack.

**SPEAR**  
The ubiquitous weapon of the era. The mark of a free man was being allowed to carry a spear – slaves could not. Spears were the ideal weapon in the shieldwall, as they kept the enemy at distance while allowing the warrior to thrust at exposed areas. Some spears had small projections, or wings, that were used to hook and pull an enemy's shield out of position. Spears were usually used over arm, aiming at the enemy's face.

**GREAVES**  
Although archaeological excavations have shown that wounds to legs were fairly common among warriors of this era, greaves were very rare. Some warriors may have used leather 'puttees' to protect their calves.

So, according to the *Lex Castrensis*, Cnut had a standing army whose wages were paid for by regular taxation, and who were bound by a particular and unique law code. This was an extraordinary accretion of royal power and one unparalleled elsewhere in Europe.

But was it true? Remember, the reconstruction of the role and function of housecarls in English society between 1016 and 1066 was based almost completely on documents written in a different country in the late 12th century, more than 100 years, or at least four generations, later.

Scholars believed that these accounts were accurate because they matched two incidents from the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, which apparently described housecarls tried before their own assembly and sentenced according to the law code in the *Lex Castrensis*. The whole argument for reading a late-12th-century document back to the early-11th century rests upon these two entries in the *Chronicle* – and the correct translation of just three words. But now it seems those words – here, *niðing* and *stefn* – were not used in the precise sense demanded by this argument but had become generalised in the usage of the time.

The *Lex Castrensis* was composed in 12th-century Denmark as the king there was attempting to increase his control on contemporary housecarls, who really were a

## “IN MOST OTHER WAYS, THEY WERE INDISTINGUISHABLE FROM THE THEGNS WHO HAD LONG SERVED THE ANGLO-SAXON KINGS”

political and military elite. How much easier to do so if it could be shown that their law code went back to Cnut the Great himself. Therefore, we can answer *cui bono*: who would benefit from this historical interpolation?

Recent scholarship has debunked the old idea of the housecarls as a discrete, standing army, bound by its own set of laws and acting as the king's troubleshooters. So, who were the men that fought alongside Harold through the autumn of 1066?

Well, one thing is for sure: they had axes. The great two-handed Dane axes were their characteristic weapon and something that set them apart from the thegns of the pre-Cnut era. But, in most other ways, they were indistinguishable from the thegns who had long served the Anglo-Saxon kings.

Thegns had started out as warriors, members of the warbands that the first generations of Anglo-Saxon kings gathered around them, held to service by the gift-giving of the king. As time passed, the duties of the thegn broadened. As reward for service, a thegn would be gifted land, where he acted as the king's representative, but this land returned

to the king upon the thegn's death. However, with the rise of monasteries, this reversion of land became untenable: institutions needed to own their land in perpetuity so that they could adequately plan for the future. So, from Offa onwards, the Anglo-Saxon kings developed the idea of bookland, where ownership of land was inscribed in deeds into books of record.

The idea, once developed, swiftly proved irresistible to the Anglo-Saxon warrior aristocracy, as it meant that a thegn could pass on land to his children, and hold that land within his family through the generations.

With this development, the qualification for the rank of thegn shifted towards property, so that by the time of Æthelred, a ceorl could ascend to the rank of thegn if he could assemble sufficient property, including five hides of land, a church, a kitchen and bell house, as well as duties in the king's hall. Even a merchant could become a thegn if he were able to fund three trading trips abroad. This was reflected in the language. Old English 'rice' ('rich' in modern English), which before had meant a powerful man, came to mean a wealthy man.



# FORM RANKS

THE BUSINESS OF HOUSECARLS WAS FIGHTING – BUT HOW DID THEY FIGHT AND WITH WHAT WEAPONS?



*The shieldwall was one of the staple Anglo-Saxon tactics*

Rebekka Heer

**“AN ENEMY COMING WITHIN STRIKING DISTANCE RAN THE RISK OF BEING CUT IN TWO”**

What set the housecarls of late Anglo-Saxon England apart from their warrior predecessors was their weapon of choice – the Dane axe – and their increasing use of the teardrop-shaped ‘Norman’ shield. As with all Anglo-Saxon warriors, they fought on foot, although as high-status warriors they rode to battle, forming up as the front rank of the shield wall and the personal bodyguard of the king and earls.

The Dane axe was a formidable weapon. Its haft, usually between three and four feet long (although display weapons had longer hafts), was held in both hands. The axe head was light and forged to be thin, with a reinforced, carbon-steel cutting edge. As wielding the Dane

axe required both hands, the housecarl had to step out from the line of the shieldwall. This was where the shift to ‘Norman’ shields makes sense, as the shield could be planted in the earth in front of the housecarl, providing some protection against arrows. With both arms free, the housecarl could build momentum by swinging the Dane axe in circles. With so much stored energy, an enemy coming within striking distance ran the risk of being cut in two. The *Bayeux Tapestry* shows a housecarl cutting the head of a Norman knight’s horse in half: in the battle itself, that housecarl could probably have cut right through the knight riding the horse as well.



*This section of the ‘Bayeux Tapestry’ shows housecarls wielding their Dane axes while also throwing spears at the Battle of Hastings*

With increasing access to the rank of thegn, there grew increasing divisions within it, with those attending upon the king most highly ranked. Documents of the time sometimes refer to the same man as 'cynges huskarl' and 'minister regis'. The latter term ('minister to the king') indicates that housecarls, and particularly those attached to the king's household, had other duties apart from warfare – just as well, really, since even a society as chronically violent as 11th-century England was not permanently fighting.

One of the most vivid examples we have of the further duties of the housecarl comes from the brief reign of Harthacnut, Cnut's son. Not taking any chances on the supporters of the previous king, his late half brother, Harold Harefoot, Harthacnut had arrived on English shores with a fleet of 62 ships. Although he received the throne without demur, Harthacnut still had to pay off his men and, like his father, he did so by taxing the people he was going to reign over. Among the tax gatherers Harthacnut sent around the kingdom were his own housecarls, two of which were sent to Worcester where they proceeded to annoy the local populace so much that they dispatched the tax gatherers.

An enraged Harthacnut ordered the rest of his housecarls to Worcester with the command to ravage and burn the city, and to kill all the men. Luckily for the people of Worcester, they received warning and almost all fled with their lives. The housecarls looted for five days and then burned the city down, which was enough to assuage Harthacnut's anger.

As members of royal or noble households, housecarls were paid a wage, but they were not mercenaries. A mercenary is a soldier who fights for whoever will pay the price. In distinction, a housecarl served his lord, for which service he received a wage. There was no contradiction between receiving a wage and loyalty unto death.



This wage, and the gifts given by their lord, enabled those housecarls who were not landholders to pay for their war gear. Relatively few housecarls seem to have held land – the main source of wealth at the time – so they must have depended on payment, gift giving and trophy taking after battles or contests to build and maintain their war gear. Not surprisingly, housecarls lavished money upon their equipment. Particularly for those employed in the household of the king or his great earls, the more resplendent the war gear, the higher the status of the wearer. When it came to the chaos and blood of the shieldwall, good war gear became, quite literally, a matter of life and death.

We can say that recent scholarship indicates that the old idea of housecarls as a discrete body of men, bound by their own law code and acting as the king's standing army is false. After Cnut's conquest, the terms housecarl and thegn seem to have been used interchangeably,

with the only significant difference being that housecarls were originally more likely to be Danish. As high-status warriors, they were still called upon to serve king and lord and, by virtue of their training and weapons, they did form an elite group of infantry. As the men of Harold's household stood on Senlac Ridge, fingering the shafts of their Dane axes, they must have been confident in their ability to see off this new pretender to the crown of England.

We know they failed, but of those that survived, many went into exile and, taking their martial skills with them, migrated east to the court of the last Romans, the Emperors of Byzantium. In the aftermath of Hastings, English housecarls went on to form the backbone of the emperor's Varangian Guard, which became known as an Anglo-Saxon force. From the ends of the earth, the last housecarls finished their service at the centre of the world, serving the last emperors – a fitting swan song.

Images: Alamy, Corbis

## KIN OR MYTH?

RECORDS CLAIM HOUSECARLS DESCENDED FROM JOMSVIKINGS – LEGENDARY MERCENARIES AND PIRATES

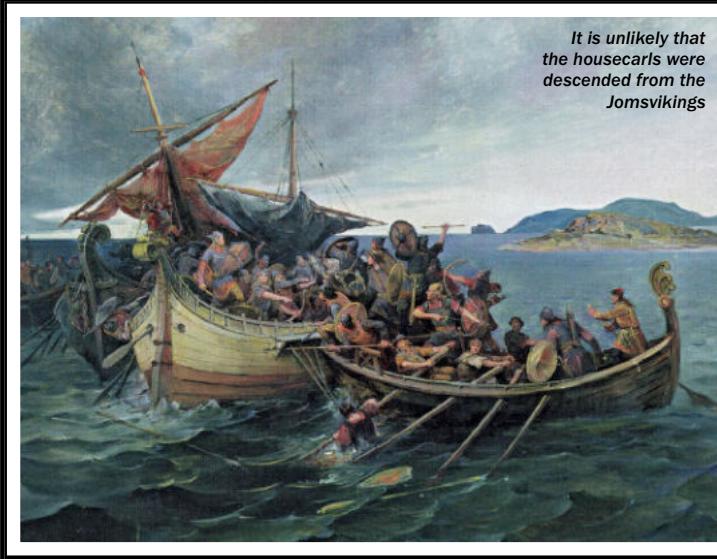
According to the *Lex Castrensis*, a band of Jomsvikings formed the nucleus of Cnut's housecarls, but who were these Vikings? According to Norse sagas, they were a brotherhood of pagan warriors who had their stronghold at Jomsborg in Pomerania, on the southern shore of the Baltic Sea.

To become a Jomsviking, a man (women and children were not admitted into their stronghold) who was aged between 18 and 50 had to prove himself, most often by besting a Jomsviking in a duel, fought according to rules of conduct. Once a Jomsviking, a man swore to avenge his brothers and to abide by the ruling of his officers in case of blood feud. Battle spoils were shared equally among the brotherhood and Jomsvikings could not spend more than three days away from camp without permission.

As warriors for hire, they fought in the dynastic wars of Sweden, Norway and Denmark, distinguishing themselves by their refusal to show fear or to retreat from an enemy unless vastly outnumbered.

But did they exist? The Norse sagas that tell of them were written after the dissolution of the brotherhood in the 11th century, so cannot be taken as historical. Nor has Jomsborg been located. However, three runestones dating from the tenth century appear to commemorate men who fell in the Battle of Fýrisvellir, when the Jomsvikings fought, and lost, alongside Styrbjörn the Strong.

The current consensus is that the Jomsvikings did indeed exist, although the details of their code cannot be reliably affirmed. It seems unlikely, however, that they contributed much to the development of housecarls in England.



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# OTTO SKORZENY

## HITLER'S ATTACK DOG

Meet Nazi Germany's special forces pioneer – a scar-faced killer who was once called 'the most dangerous man in Europe'

WORDS NICK SOLDINGER

In 1928, while a student at Vienna Technical College, 20-year-old Otto Skorzeny got what he most wanted in life: facial disfigurement. Schmissen – or honour scars – were trophies that many young German and Austrian men coveted in the early 20th century. Earned in ritualised university fraternity duels, the winner was often considered to be the man who walked away with the fetishistic injury rather than the one who inflicted it. In the warped cult of German militarism, a scarred face was seen as a badge of courage, proof that a would-be warrior was prepared to offer part, or perhaps all, of his body for sacrifice to a greater cause.

The huge scar that marred Skorzeny's face and that he'd see every morning in the mirror for the rest of his life also left a profound mental mark on him. As the man who'd go on to be the pioneering leader of the Nazi special forces would later reveal: "My knowledge of pain, learned with the sabre, taught me not to be afraid, and just as in duelling when you must concentrate on your enemy's cheek, so too in war. You cannot waste time on feinting and sidestepping. You must decide on your target and go in."

Otto Skorzeny was born into a prosperous Viennese family on 12 June 1908. His father ran an engineering works that struggled in the wake of World War I. With the collapse of the Habsburg Empire and the Austrian economy, Otto grew up in a household of austerity and fading grandeur. These were tough times for the nation, and the elegant Viennese streets were

frequently used as stages for violent clashes between conflicting political groups. Skorzeny – an upper middle-class militarist drenched in 19th-century nationalism – was only ever going to pick one side.

In 1932, having graduated from college and now running his own struggling engineering business, Skorzeny went to Vienna's Engelmann Arena to hear leading German Nazi Joseph Goebbels give a speech. Hitler's articulate understudy explained everything – why Austria was struggling, why good Aryan folk were suffering unfairly, and how all that could be fixed – so clearly, in fact, that Skorzeny joined the party on the spot.

When the Austrian government banned the Nazi party in the following year amid violence and plots, Skorzeny joined the Vienna Gymnastics Club instead. This right-wing paramilitary organisation often added its muscle to police clampdowns of left-wing demonstrations, and Skorzeny soon became known as a capable street fighter. It was a reputation that would pay out big time once he began his military career.

**"MY KNOWLEDGE OF PAIN, LEARNED WITH THE SABRE, TAUGHT ME NOT TO BE AFRAID, AND JUST AS IN DUELING WHEN YOU MUST CONCENTRATE ON YOUR ENEMY'S CHEEK, SO TOO IN WAR"**

*Skorzeny's prominent  
facial scar, like his  
Knights Cross and  
Iron Cross, were all  
badges of honour  
for him*



## OTTO SKORZENY

In 1938, in a foreboding act of international thuggery, Hitler forcibly incorporated Austria into the Nazi State via the so-called Anschluss. A year later, after doing the same thing in Czechoslovakia, and then Poland, Nazi Germany pushed the world into war. Skorzeny immediately tried to enlist. He initially tried the Luftwaffe, but at 31 and six foot four, was considered too old and too tall for aircrew. So instead he volunteered for the Waffen SS as an officer cadet.

Ambitious from the beginning, Skorzeny used his engineering background to impress his superiors by designing ramps that could be used to load tanks onto ships. He was soon serving with SS Das Reich – an elite

armoured division – as a technical officer, seeing action in Holland and France in 1940. During the invasion of Yugoslavia the following year, he was promoted to First Lieutenant after capturing 54 enemy soldiers.

Two months later, Operation Barbarossa was launched. The vast Nazi crusade against the Soviet Union saw more than 3 million men march eastward on a front that stretched from the Baltic to the Black Sea. SS Das Reich – with Skorzeny in its ranks – was at the very point of the blade that now stabbed deep into Mother Russia.

As an engineering officer, Skorzeny's chief task was maintaining Das Reich's vehicles, but being on the sharp end of the biggest

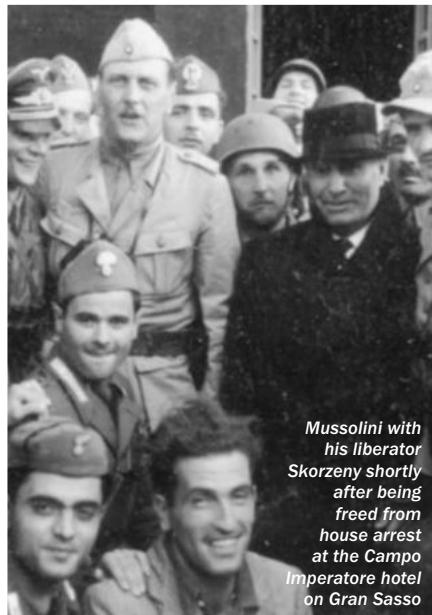
operation in military history, he was inevitably going to see a lot of combat. He did, right up until December, when the Germans' merciless advance was finally frozen by the Russian winter. By then, the Germans had advanced so far into the USSR that Stalin could hear Das Reich's guns from his bedroom window in the Kremlin. The time was ripe for a massive Soviet counter offensive.

As the Soviets hit back hard, the Germans experienced their first major casualties of the campaign. Skorzeny was among them. Hit in the back of the head by artillery shrapnel, he refused all treatment except for a bandage and a glass of schnapps, and was soon back with his unit. Like the scar on his face, the

*The landing zone for Skorzeny's gliders on Gran Sasso left little margin for error. In total he lost three of his 12 planes in the operation*



*Mussolini with his liberator Skorzeny shortly after being freed from house arrest at the Campo Imperatore hotel on Gran Sasso*



*Skorzeny's commandos shortly after their successful mission to free Mussolini. The Gran Sasso Mountains can be seen behind them*



# "HIT IN THE BACK OF THE HEAD BY ARTILLERY SHRAPNEL, HE REFUSED ALL TREATMENT EXCEPT FOR A BANDAGE AND A GLASS OF SCHNAPPS"

holes in his skull were another medal that marked him out. His conspicuous heroics that day won him the Iron Cross – the first of many laurels. However, his time with regular soldiering was coming to an end. His head

wounds were serious, and despite his protests to the contrary, he was shipped back to Berlin to convalesce.

By this time, pioneering British commando raids on mainland Europe were taking German lives and grabbing headlines. Skorzeny was inspired. Giant armies could be stopped by the weather and dragged into costly attrition battles. Yet small groups of dedicated soldiers could hit their enemy hard, fast and effectively. Skorzeny read everything he could on unconventional combat. He also began talking to anyone who would listen about his fervent take on guerrilla warfare.

In early 1943, his ideas came to the attention of Ernst Kaltenbrunner, the new head

of Reich security. Kaltenbrunner's predecessor, Reinhard Heydrich, had been assassinated by British-trained Czech commandos, so was only too aware of the effectiveness of this new type of soldier. As a former Austrian Nazi chief, he also remembered Skorzeny from his days as an enforcer on the streets of Vienna, and recommended he be put in charge of developing the Nazis' first commando unit.

By April 1943, Skorzeny, newly promoted to captain, was head of Germany's first special-forces unit. Named after their training area near Berlin, they were called the Friedenthal Hunting Group. That summer, Otto was sent to Iran with the objective of recruiting local tribes to disrupt Allied trade routes to the Soviet Union.



# RAID ON DRVAR

WHEN SKORZENY'S PLAN TO KILL YUGOSLAV PARTISAN LEADER TITO WAS COMPROMISED, A DARING, AND ULTIMATELY DISASTROUS, ALTERNATIVE WAS DEVISED

In Spring 1944, Skorzeny's unit was assigned to Operation Knight's Move, a raid intended to capture Yugoslav partisan leader Josip Tito. The leader was based in the fortified Bosnian

mountain town of Drvar. Skorzeny was tasked with planning the raid, and after obtaining information from a partisan deserter that pinpointed Tito's headquarters in a cave outside the town, proposed he infiltrate Drvar with a

small team and assassinate Tito. Skorzeny's plan, however, was compromised by a security breach, and instead a combined airborne and ground assault was ordered that Skorzeny refused to endorse. The subsequent raid on Drvar was a disaster.



## 1. INITIAL BOMBING RAID

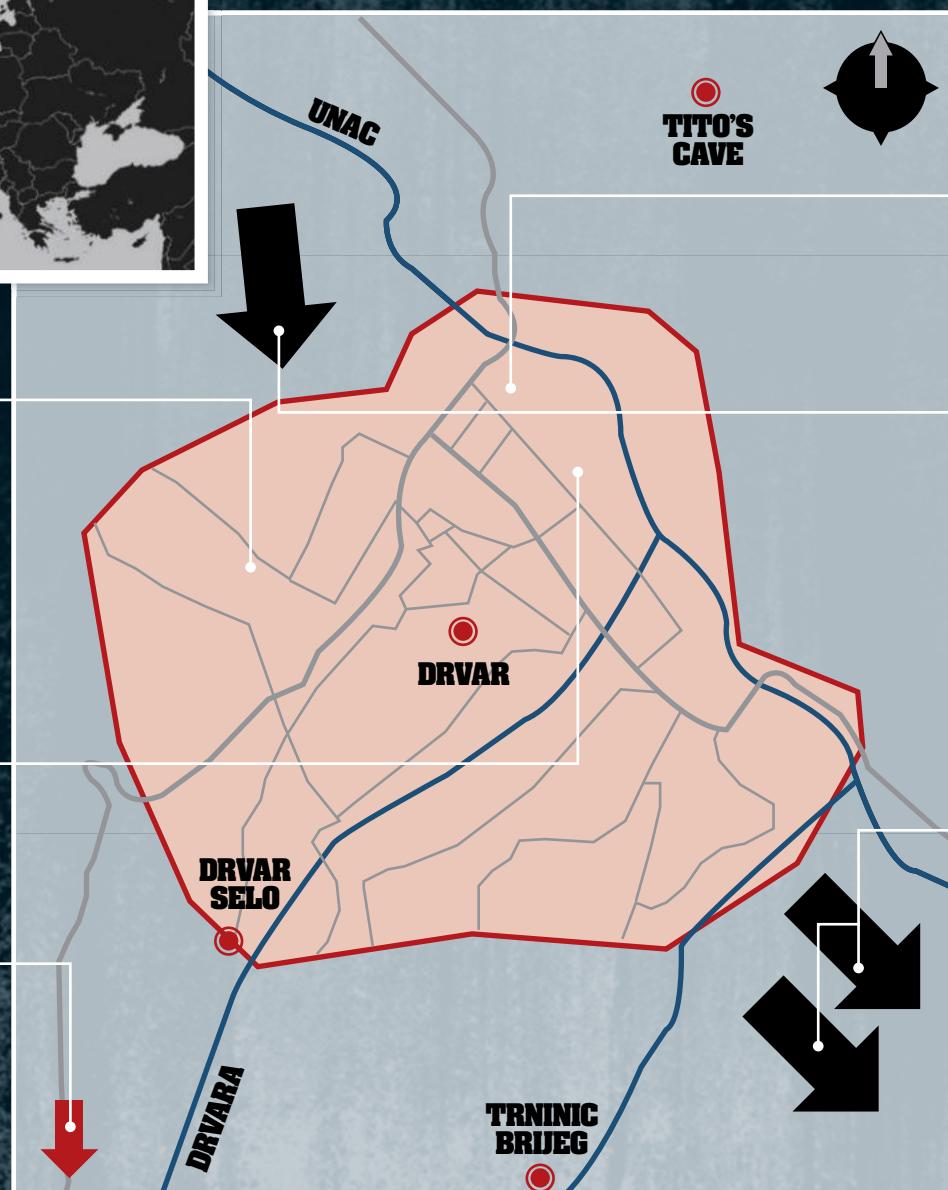
25 May 1944. 6.35am. Five Luftwaffe bomber squadrons, including Ju 87 dive bombers, begin hitting targets in and around Drvar. A total of 440 sorties are flown throughout the day.

## 2. FIRST AIRBORNE ASSAULT

7am. 654 men of the 500th SS Parachute Battalion arrive by 'chute and glider, seizing Drvar by 9am. They then push north towards Tito's cave, suffering casualties.

## 3. TITO ESCAPES

Tito, along with his guests Churchill's son Randolph and the novelist Evelyn Waugh, then a commando, had been whisked away and were soon safely aboard HMS Blackmore in the Adriatic.



## 4. SECOND AIRBORNE ASSAULT

Noon and another 220 paratroopers arrive. By now, Tito has escaped and the partisans are counter-attacking in force. The Germans withdraw to a cemetery and dig in for the night.

## 5. GROUND FORCE ASSAULT

26 May. 12.45pm. Having spent the previous 24 hours trying to punch their way through to Drvar, German motorised columns of the XV Mountain Corps finally relieve the beleaguered paratroopers.

## 6. THE WITHDRAWAL

Having suffered about 1,800 casualties, the Germans pull out, having achieved nothing more impressive than capturing Tito's uniform and slaughtering about 2,000 civilians. Skorzeny's refusal to lead the raid is vindicated.

By July, Skorzeny had come to the attention of Hitler and on 26 July he was summoned to the Führer's secret HQ in East Prussia – the Wolf's Lair. Skorzeny's unit was about to get its second assignment – it was a mission that would make Skorzeny famous.

Two days before Hitler's meeting with Skorzeny, the Italian dictator Benito Mussolini was arrested by his own people and removed from power. Concerned that Italy might drop out of the war, Hitler demanded his oldest ally be reinstated. When the new Italian government refused, Hitler ordered Il Duce be rescued before he could be handed over to the Allies – Skorzeny, he decided, was the man to do it.

The mission was so secret that the only people given clearance were the Nazi leadership, Skorzeny's unit, select members of the Luftwaffe and paratroopers from General Kurt Student's elite airborne forces, who were to support the mission.

The outfit shipped out for Italy, arriving in early August and establishing a base at the Pratica di Mare Airfield near Rome. The hunt for Mussolini then began. Wild rumours circulated as to where he might be, with the tiny island of Ponza, off Italy's west coast, and Sardinia the most likely destinations. Several aerial and sea-borne reconnaissance missions followed – including one during which the plane Skorzeny was in was shot down – but all proved fruitless.

**"HITLER ORDERED IL DUCE BE RESCUED BEFORE HE COULD BE HANDED OVER TO THE ALLIES – SKORZENY, HE DECIDED, WAS THE MAN TO DO IT"**



Skorzeny and Hitler at the Führer's secret HQ in East Prussia: the Wolf's Lair. Skorzeny was frequently summoned for meetings with Hitler



## HOWL AT THE MOON

THE THIRD REICH PLANNED A PRO-NAZI INSURGENCY TO FIGHT ON AFTER IT COLLAPSED. ITS FIGHTERS WERE TO BE KNOWN AS WEREWOLVES

Operation Werewolf was dreamt up by SS Chief Heinrich Himmler. In late 1944, with the Allies closing in on all sides, he made plans for 5,000 volunteers from the Waffen SS and the Hitler Youth to carry on the fight behind enemy lines as the Reich's lands fell. Once an area had been overrun, so-called Werewolf Battalions would draw weapons from pre-positioned caches and conduct a guerrilla war against the occupying armies.

The operation was put under the command of a fanatical SS officer called Hans-Adolf Prützmann, who had become something of an expert in guerrilla tactics after spending three years fighting Ukrainian partisans. A training centre was established at Hülchrath Castle on the Rhine, and here volunteers were instructed in demolition, sabotage, hand-to-hand combat and infiltration techniques. The plan was to have the forces ready by early 1945 and to establish a headquarters high in the Bavarian Alps.

The operation's name was pinched from a book called *Der Wehrwolf*. Written in 1910 by Hermann Löns, a novelist popular in Nazi circles, it tells the

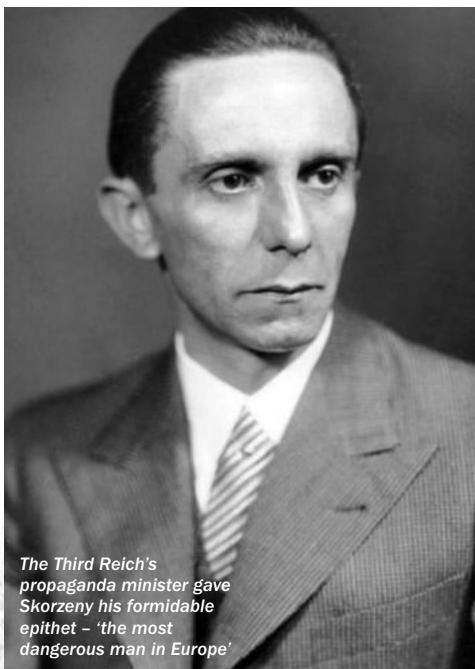
story of a good German peasant who goes on the rampage against foreign invaders after they killed his family during the Thirty Years' War.

Far from life imitating art, however, Operation Werewolf failed to deliver on Himmler's promise of an armed insurgency that would keep the Nazi nightmare alive. Operations were sporadic at best, although the Nazis made a great deal of their minor and often invented exploits in the dying days of the war. Goebbels even established Radio Werewolf to broadcast phoney news reports in between wild appeals for the war-weary German civilian population to rise up against the occupying Allies.

Prützmann killed himself just as the war ended, and Skorzeny was lined up to lead the insurgency – but none materialised. Germany had been fighting almost continuously for six years. It'd suffered 3.5 million military casualties and nearly 750,000 civilian ones. Its elegant cities had been reduced to rubble while the Nazis' insatiable appetite for killing machines had left its economy exhausted. Germany had become a country entirely sick of war.



Above: Shortly before the end of the war, Hans-Adolf Prützmann was captured by the Allies. He took his life while in custody



*The Third Reich's propaganda minister gave Skorzeny his formidable epithet – 'the most dangerous man in Europe'*

By early autumn, time was running out. On 3 September 1943, Allied forces landed on the Italian mainland at Solerno, and a few days later the Italian government surrendered. Hitler's response was to immediately send German troops south to hold the line, but what he really wanted was Italy back in the war. At about this time, Skorzeny's men intercepted a radio signal indicating a large security operation around the Gran Sasso mountains north east of Rome. The area was famous for its ski resort and in particular a luxury hotel complex that was only accessible via cable car. After a further bit of nosing around, Skorzeny became convinced that this was where Mussolini was being held.

On 8 September, Skorzeny had an aerial reconnaissance of the hotel undertaken. It showed that although the hotel was totally isolated, there was a small open area nearby that might serve as a landing zone for gliders. Skorzeny drew up a plan. He'd bring his men in by glider, seize the hotel, and grab Mussolini. Meanwhile, Student's paratroopers would drive to the cable station at the foot of the mountain and capture it. Mussolini could then be brought down to it by cable car and flown to safety. It was audacious – and highly risky. When he shared it with the Luftwaffe officers on his team, they gloomily predicted an 80 per cent casualty rate. Skorzeny, though, was undeterred. If there was any chance Operation Oak, as he codenamed the raid, could succeed, he'd lead it – whatever the odds.

The operation was scheduled for 12 September. Skorzeny's troops were to land next to the hotel at 7am when winds on the mountain would be lightest. They planned to go from an airfield near Gran Sasso, but when the planned morning arrived, so did a fleet of US bombers, which punched holes right across the airstrip. The mission was delayed. The first of Skorzeny's 12 gliders didn't get off the ground until 12.30pm, while one actually crashed on takeoff as they struggled along the crater-filled runway.

Skorzeny flew in the lead aircraft, accompanied by Italian Military Police General Fernando Soleti. Mussolini was being guarded by Italian Military Police and Skorzeny hoped the presence of one of their generals would dissuade the guards from opening fire. With what remained of their depleted 90-strong force airborne, 30 of Student's paratroopers now raced by road to the Gran Sasso's lower cable station, seizing it at 12.45pm.

With the escape route secure, the gliders began the treacherous descent onto the tiny Gran Sasso landing strip, which was, they realised as they got closer, strewn with rubble and rocks. Remarkably, the pilot of Skorzeny's glider managed to land it less than 20 metres from the hotel. Pushing General Soleti out in front of him, Skorzeny rushed towards the building. The Italian guards watched on stunned; not one of them reacted. Within minutes, Mussolini was found in a room guarded by two Italian officers. Without a shot, he was handed over to Skorzeny who, with

**"IF THERE WAS ANY CHANCE OPERATION OAK, AS HE CODENAMED THE RAID, COULD SUCCEED, HE'D LEAD IT – WHATEVER THE ODDS"**

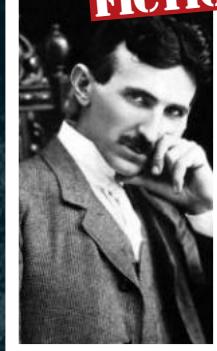
# RUMOURS

FACT OR FICTION? THE FIVE MADDEST STORIES EVER TO CIRCULATE ABOUT OTTO SKORZENY – EUROPE'S MOST DANGEROUS MAN

## HE ASSASSINATED NIKOLA TESLA

The great physicist Nikola Tesla, who created the AC electrical supply system, was according to some working on a 'death ray' machine when his body was found in a New York hotel room in 1943. According to others, Skorzeny broke in, strangled Tesla and stole the scientist's research.

FICTION



## HE MET CHURCHILL AFTER THE WAR

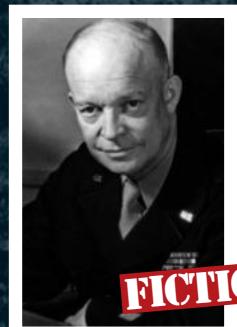
According to some 'historians', Winston Churchill holidayed in Italy in 1951 in order to secretly meet with Skorzeny. It's claimed that Skorzeny had some letters that Churchill had sent to Mussolini that painted the British PM in a fascistic light. He apparently swapped them for the release of Skorzeny's former SS comrades from prison.

FICTION

## HE PLANNED TO KILL EISENHOWER

During the Battle of the Bulge, such was the chaos successfully caused by Skorzeny's false-flag operation that rumours began to fly that Skorzeny was actually on his way to Versailles to murder the Allied Supreme Commander General Dwight D Eisenhower. Security around the general was actually doubled as a result.

FICTION



## HE ESCAPED FROM PRISON

When British agent Forest Yeo-Thomas revealed during Skorzeny's trial in 1947 that British commandos had also worn enemy uniforms during the war, Skorzeny was acquitted of war crimes. Sent to an internment camp, he was then busted out by former SS cronies dressed as US guards, and went on the run.

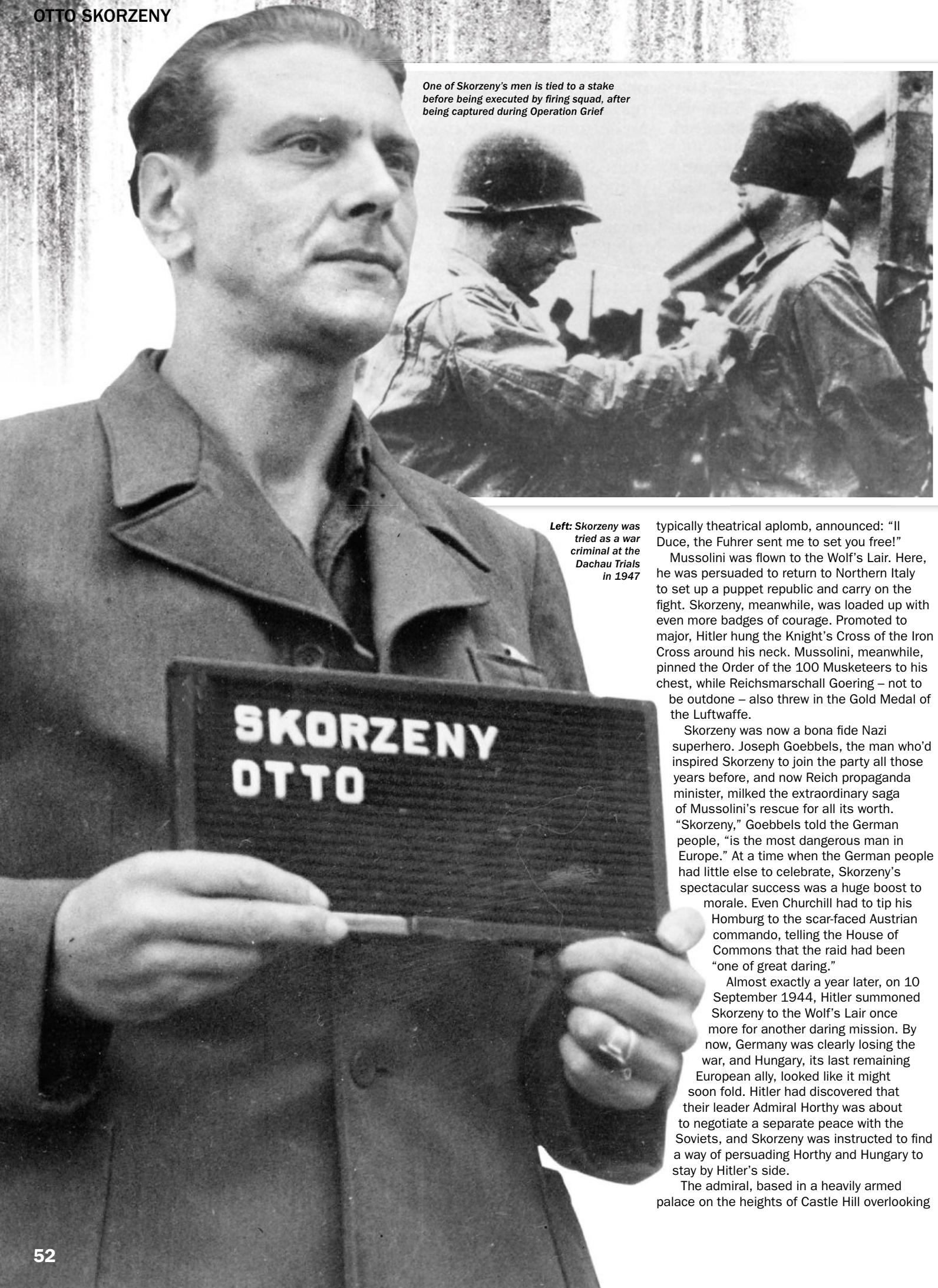
FACT

## HE HAD AN AFFAIR WITH EVA PERÓN

After the war, as a stateless citizen, Skorzeny helped former Nazis find refuge in South America. His connections there eventually led him to work for Argentina's fascist dictator Juan Perón, and it's claimed while in Buenos Aires Skorzeny had an affair with his wife, the famous Eva (Evita) Perón.



FACT, POSSIBLY



*One of Skorzeny's men is tied to a stake before being executed by firing squad, after being captured during Operation Greif*

*Left: Skorzeny was tried as a war criminal at the Dachau Trials in 1947*

typically theatrical aplomb, announced: "Il Duce, the Führer sent me to set you free!"

Mussolini was flown to the Wolf's Lair. Here, he was persuaded to return to Northern Italy to set up a puppet republic and carry on the fight. Skorzeny, meanwhile, was loaded up with even more badges of courage. Promoted to major, Hitler hung the Knight's Cross of the Iron Cross around his neck. Mussolini, meanwhile, pinned the Order of the 100 Musketeers to his chest, while Reichsmarschall Goering – not to be outdone – also threw in the Gold Medal of the Luftwaffe.

Skorzeny was now a bona fide Nazi superhero. Joseph Goebbels, the man who'd inspired Skorzeny to join the party all those years before, and now Reich propaganda minister, milked the extraordinary saga of Mussolini's rescue for all its worth. "Skorzeny," Goebbels told the German people, "is the most dangerous man in Europe." At a time when the German people had little else to celebrate, Skorzeny's spectacular success was a huge boost to morale. Even Churchill had to tip his Homburg to the scar-faced Austrian commando, telling the House of Commons that the raid had been "one of great daring."

Almost exactly a year later, on 10 September 1944, Hitler summoned Skorzeny to the Wolf's Lair once more for another daring mission. By now, Germany was clearly losing the war, and Hungary, its last remaining European ally, looked like it might soon fold. Hitler had discovered that their leader Admiral Horthy was about to negotiate a separate peace with the Soviets, and Skorzeny was instructed to find a way of persuading Horthy and Hungary to stay by Hitler's side.

The admiral, based in a heavily armed palace on the heights of Castle Hill overlooking

## "SKORZENY HAD PROVEN THAT THE ACTIONS OF A FEW DETERMINED MEN COULD AFFECT THE FATE OF MILLIONS"

Budapest, had been persuaded by his son Miklós to run up the white flag rather than risk Hungary's further destruction. But who did the admiral love more – his country or his son? To find out the answer to that, Skorzeny was ordered to kidnap Miklós. The Nazis would then hold him hostage to see if Admiral Horthy might then change his mind.

Skorzeny arrived in Budapest on 15 October. Having learned that Miklós was secretly meeting with Soviet representatives at a house in Budapest's back streets, he acted with a fencer's decisiveness. The meeting had barely begun when Skorzeny's men attacked the house. After a brief fire fight, Miklós was captured, wrapped in a carpet and spirited away to Germany, where he'd spend the rest of the war as a prisoner.

Horthy, though, didn't blink. He denounced the kidnapping and stated that an armistice with the USSR would take place immediately. Skorzeny responded with absolute ruthlessness. Leading a convoy that included four tiger tanks up Castle Hill to Horthy's palace, he bluffed his way past the barricades until he was finally challenged and stopped at the last barrier. By then, though, it was too late. Skorzeny's force stormed the palace and, at a loss of less than 20 of his men, seized power. Horthy was arrested and replaced by Hitler acolyte Ferenc Szálasi. Hungary would

be forced to fight on to the end of the war at a terrible cost. Once again, though, Skorzeny had proven that the actions of a few determined men could affect the fate of millions.

Skorzeny's last great contribution to the war came during Hitler's last great gamble – his attempt to bust through the Allied lines and retake the vital port of Antwerp in what would become known as the Battle of the Bulge. On 16 December 1944, two German panzer armies stabbed their way through the Allied front lines. They pierced it in exactly the same place that they'd done four years previously – the Ardennes Forest. The region was no better defended than it had been in 1940 and again the Allies were caught totally by surprise.

At the very tip of the attack were Skorzeny's special forces. Dressed in American uniforms and driving in captured vehicles, his men – many also fluent in English – were tasked with spreading confusion among the Allied troops. As the brutal offensive raged on in the cold and the snow, Skorzeny's men wreaked chaos. Dressed as US military policemen, they misdirected traffic, ordered units to turn back and changed signposts.

With the deception plans playing their part, the American front line began to collapse. The adverse weather conditions stymied Allied air superiority and within days thousands of American GIs had been taken prisoner. As

rumours flew of enemy infiltrators, the US response to the crisis was further hampered, with every soldier and vehicle subject to roadblocks and rigorous checking.

Short on fuel and supplies, however, it was only a matter of time before Hitler's last-gasp offensive ran out of clout. When the weather finally lifted, and the Allies were once again able to control the skies, Hitler's troops were slaughtered in the snow as they were chased back to the German border. Although Skorzeny escaped unscathed, many of his men – captured wearing US uniforms – were executed as spies.

In early April 1945, Skorzeny was summoned to Berlin for the last time. Hitler awarded him oak leaves to his Iron Cross and ordered him to the Bavarian mountains. The resistance forces of the Nazis' so-called 'Werewolf' battalions were gathering there, Hitler told him, and Skorzeny was to take charge of them and continue the fight. Skorzeny escaped Berlin just as the Soviets tightened their noose around the city's neck, reaching the Nazi heartland in the south a few days later. When he arrived, however, he discovered no army to command. It was just another phantom force spat out by Hitler's garbled imagination in the final days of his madness.

On 30 April, news reached Skorzeny that Hitler had blown his brains out while Berlin burned around him. Ten days later, with the war lost and nowhere left to run, Skorzeny gave himself up. His arrest made headlines around the world. Skorzeny, the great hoarder of awards, had himself become a trophy.

# SKORZENY'S GLOBAL TERROR

AFTER THE WAR, SEEMINGLY ANSWERABLE TO NO ONE, SKORZENY CONTINUED TO CAUSE TROUBLE AND MADE A FORTUNE IN THE PROCESS

### MIDDLE EASTERN POWER BROKER

Skorzeny was reportedly involved in organising mercenary groups made up of former SS men throughout the Middle East. Some place him in Egypt around the time of the country's standoff with Britain over the 1952 Suez crisis, while others credit him with helping Gaddafi establish his grip on Libya in 1969.

### THE PALADIN GROUP

Skorzeny, who died in 1975, spent much of his later life under the protection of Spain's General Franco. Based in Alicante, he established the Paladin Group, an international outfit that specialised in guerrilla training. His clients included the South African government, the Greek Military Junta of 1967-74, as well as Franco's regime.

### DIE SPINNE

While hiding out on a Bavarian farm in the late 1940s, Skorzeny set up the secret organisation Die Spinne. Dedicated to smuggling former SS men out of Europe via secret escape routes, known as ratlines, to South America or the Middle East. He may have helped up to 600 escape justice.

### OPERATION LONG JUMP

When Stalin, Churchill and Roosevelt met in Iran for the Tehran Conference of 1943, it is thought that Skorzeny may have been given orders to attempt to assassinate them. The truth about the operation, codenamed Long Jump, remains shrouded in mystery. It was either called off after a security breach or was simply a scare story.



# LAST STAND OF THE SAMURAI

Disgruntled feudal warriors rise up against their government in a tragic clash that sees tradition and modernity collide on the battlefield

WORDS MIGUEL MIRANDA

**I**t was a cold September morning, hours from the first glimmers of dawn. Exhausted samurai huddled crouched in ditches and dugouts they had unearthed to protect themselves from the gunfire below. Their crude shelters formed an unsightly patchwork on the scenic hilltop of Shiroyama, which was perhaps Kagoshima's best-known landmark after the majestic Mount Sakurajima across its harbour.

These samurai camped in Shiroyama were led by a remarkable man, Saigo Takamori, who embodied the ideals of his class. He conducted himself with magnanimity and good breeding expected of a samurai and statesman, but he was also possessed by a deep-seated patriotism that manifested in dreams of waging war abroad. It was, admittedly, a characteristic lust for battle typical among his class.

Posthumous accounts of his ordeal at Shiroyama report he was ensconced in a trench six feet deep. It was likely he was ailing and exhausted, as were most of his men. A month earlier he led a perilous flight from nearby Hyuga where they escaped encirclement and annihilation by overwhelming Imperial forces. Within a week they had fought their way to Kagoshima and almost overwhelmed the token force defending it, but their ammunition was depleted and enemy reinforcements were hot on their trail. Taking whatever supplies they could, they made their last stand on Shiroyama.

Fewer than 400 samurai remained from the 20,000 who rallied behind Saigo in February. He was a retainer and trusted adviser of the Shimazus, a powerful clan with a long martial tradition whose domain included Satsuma, Osumi and Hyuga. Owing to their location – the southern fringe of Kyushu – the Shimazu's relations with the central government, at first the Tokugawa Shoguns and then the Emperor Meiji's administration, were always tenuous.

The Shimazus were imperialists and xenophobes imbued with a conquering spirit. Having helped end the Tokugawa Shogunate in 1867, their leaders envisioned a new role

for themselves as Japan's empire builders, and it would be their samurai who would annex the Korean peninsula and beyond using modern weapons. The Empire of Japan would henceforth rise among the nations without peer and remain so for as long as the Sun cast its golden rays on their homeland.

This isn't what happened. In February 1877, the hardliners among the Satsuma samurai mobilised and gathered their arms. Saigo, incensed by reports that policemen from Tokyo had been sent to Kagoshima with the express purpose of arranging his assassination, assumed leadership over this unruly legion. It was a fitting role for a hero of the Boshin Civil War, from 1868-69, which established the Meiji government's dominance, a transition recognised by history as the Restoration that set Japan on the path to modernity.

Now, Saigo and his rebel samurai were going to challenge the same government they so ardently fought for in previous years. They soon laid siege to Kumamoto Castle, situated west of Satsuma and a symbol of Tokyo's authority. Government reinforcements were mobilised and transported with utmost haste to Kyushu, and their numbers, firepower, and expert leadership wore down Saigo's battalions. Even if these rebellious samurai could rely on popular support and an intimate knowledge of terrain, their crusade was still precarious.

Kumamoto Castle survived a bitter siege and the Satsuma rebels were soon routed. From June until August, not a single battle they fought resulted in victory although their

**"EVEN IF THESE REBELLIOUS SAMURAI COULD RELY ON POPULAR SUPPORT AND AN INTIMATE KNOWLEDGE OF TERRAIN, THEIR CRUSADE WAS STILL PRECARIOUS"**



*Samurai of the Satsuma domain in the 1860s, during the Boshin War, in which they fought against the Shogunate, on the side of Emperor Meiji*



grim determination and unorthodox tactics wrought havoc on the conscripts and policemen dispatched to fight them. However, guerilla wars are often fruitless endeavours, and in the fashion of 19th-century conflicts where traditional arms battled modern (European) counterparts, the former succumbed.

What was left of Saigo's legion was trapped in Shiroyama. The date was 24 September 1877, and beneath their miserable assemblage were 30,000 Imperial troops led by Prince Arisugawa Taruhito, an aristocrat tasked with conquering Satsuma in the emperor's name.

His regiments might have comprised peasants conscripted to swell the Imperial Army's ranks, but they weren't inferior fighting

men. On the contrary, thanks to the drill imposed by French instructors, they dispored themselves with the efficiency and organisation familiar among European armies. Even their arms and uniform were of French origin.

These early-modern Japanese soldiers were equipped with the Minié rifle, which featured superb range, a powerful cartridge and general ease of use. As a matter of fact, both Springfield and Enfield, the leading gun makers in the United States and Britain, manufactured it under license. Owing to a dearth of historical research on the period, it's unknown if these Japanese Minié rifles were of the older muzzle-loading variety or the newer breech loaders, but perhaps it was the latter.

The Imperial forces were equipped with artillery too. More than 100 pieces of varying calibres were sufficient to subdue the remaining Satsuma rebels in the final struggle for Shiroyama. It was a British diplomat and adventurer, Augustus H Mounsey, who provided the English-speaking world with an authoritative account of the conflict in his book, *The Satsuma Rebellion*.

Published two years after the events it describes, Mounsey's rich detail captures the final hours of the doomed rebels: "Before dawn of the 24th of September a tremendous shower of shells was poured on the summit of the hill, and under its cover and in the darkness the assaulting parties quickly scaled its slopes. They reached its brow almost without loss and thence fired volley upon volley with deadly effect into the rebel camp... the rebels had been taken unawares and unprepared for a serious attack... they resisted, as far as men could resist... but the contest was too unequal to last. Saigo was amongst the first to fall."

**"THANKS TO THE DRILL IMPOSED BY FRENCH INSTRUCTORS, THEY DISPORDED THEMSELVES WITH THE EFFICIENCY AND ORGANISATION FAMILIAR AMONG EUROPEAN ARMIES"**



According to Mounsey's narrative, as Saigo drew his last breath, a lieutenant of his named Hemmi Jiuroda completed the rite of *hara-kiri* by decapitating his master. A servant then retrieved the severed head and attempted to bury it. It was found, however, and Saigo's bloodied remains were brought down to Kagoshima later in the day.

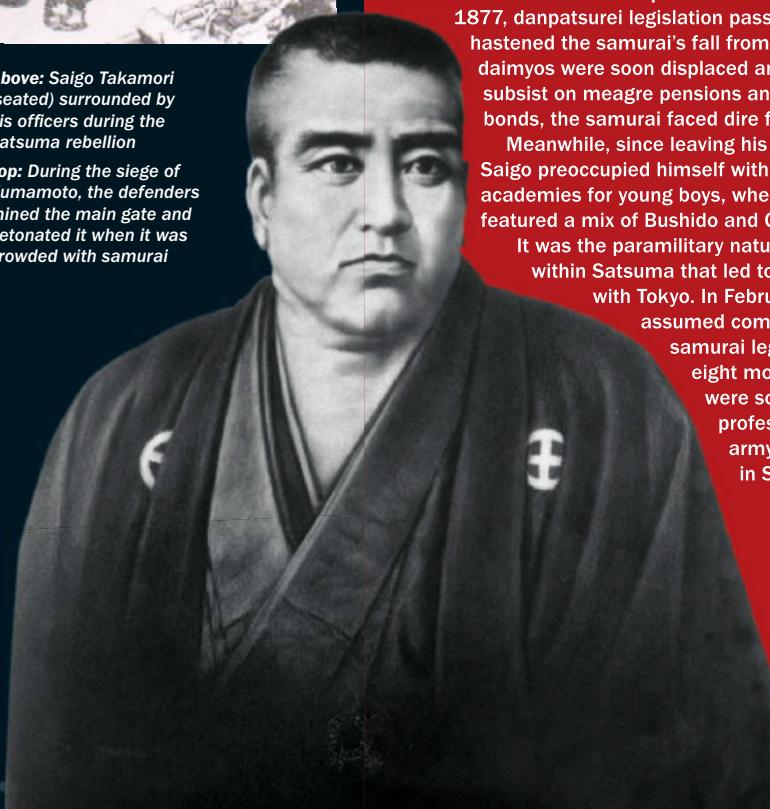
This was the ignominious end of Satsuma's legendary uprising and the men who fought it – the samurai. To think it all began with a redress of grievances.

### Those who serve

An assessment of its historical record shows Japanese civilisation has a lineage stretching 4,000 years into the past and perhaps further back to the mythic circumstances that created fabled Yamato from the Pacific Ocean's volcanic periphery. The emblematic samurai and their warrior ethos, however, only emerged in the last 1,000 years. The general consensus regarding the beginning of their existence is that they

*Above: Saigo Takamori (seated) surrounded by his officers during the Satsuma rebellion*

*Top: During the siege of Kumamoto, the defenders mined the main gate and detonated it when it was crowded with samurai*



# Saigo Takamori

'THE LAST TRUE SAMURAI'

A PRAGMATIST AT HEART, SAIGO WAS ALMOST THE LEAST LIKELY TO RISE IN ARMS AGAINST THE VERY GOVERNMENT HE HELPED ESTABLISH

Given their high social status, the patronage of their lords and stipends in *koku*, samurai could afford comfortable lives. However, poor samurai families did exist. Saigo Takamori, born on 23 January 1828 in Kagoshima, came from such a family. They were of good physical stock, at least, and Saigo grew to an impressive height. Perhaps it was having six siblings – three brothers and three sisters – that moulded his natural acumen for leadership. Even with his humble origins, Saigo's early manhood saw his spectacular advancement in the service of the Shimazu clan.

Soon he was dispatched to Edo where he distinguished himself further with his tact and clarity of thinking. The memory of Saigo as a romantic figure is a stark contrast to the cunning negotiator and diplomat who fought heroically during the Boshin Civil War from 1868–69.

Saigo cut a dashing figure and was recognisable for his muscular arms and broad shoulders. Over the years his neck appeared to have vanished into his chest and the effect on his appearance suggested he was a civilised brute. In reality, he possessed a keen taste for Confucian literature and other classic texts. Accounts of his life reveal he married three times and sired at least five children. By the time he neared his 50s, Saigo was known to have been fond of warm baths and domestic bliss. A baffling claim about his private life suggested he suffered from enlarged testicles from an infection caused by a parasitic worm.

As the Meiji administration quickly rendered his social class obsolete, he clung to the belief that the samurai of Japan could still serve a purpose. He was a staunch advocate for launching another invasion of Korea that would reduce it to a vassal state.

From 1870 until the eruption of the rising he led in 1877, *danpatsurei* legislation passed in Tokyo hastened the samurai's fall from grace. As their daimyos were soon displaced and forced to subsist on meagre pensions and government bonds, the samurai faced dire financial straits.

Meanwhile, since leaving his duties in Tokyo, Saigo preoccupied himself with founding *shigakko* academies for young boys, where the curriculum featured a mix of *Bushido* and Confucian texts.

It was the paramilitary nature of activities within Satsuma that led to a confrontation with Tokyo. In February 1877, Saigo assumed command of a motley samurai legion. Within eight months, his forces were scattered by a professional conscript army and he perished in Shiroyama.

*Left: After the end of the rebellion, there were many legends that claimed Saigo was not dead*

emerged in the 12th century, during the Kamakura period that began when Minamoto Yoritomo was recognised as Japan's first true Shogun, or feudal overlord.

The institution that was the Shogunate, erected on a foundation composed of samurai warrior clans, depended on an exacting feudal system where petty warlords pretended deference towards a central government while at the same time scheming to undermine it and advance their own power. This was the political landscape of Japan for several centuries until the Meiji Restoration.

Yet the samurai and its occupation may have an even earlier genesis. In the first millennium of what Western Europe deems the Common Era, a centralised state had already emerged in the main island Honshu. Its epicentre was the lush Kanto Plain, a stretch of fertile land facing the Pacific Ocean and ringed by mountains.

At around the same period when Byzantine Rome was at its height, an ancient Imperial

dynasty not only governed Japan but pursued foreign conquests in the Korean peninsula, a struggle that frequently embroiled the Chinese state beyond the Yellow Sea. For almost 200 years a Japanese enclave in Southern Korea called Mimana was reputed to have existed before it fell to a rival kingdom.

Japan's emperors during the first millennium were hardly the cloistered sovereigns they later became. As far back as the 2nd century the legendary Empress Jingu-Kogo carried out an invasion of Korea and further consolidated power at home. This pattern would continually manifest for centuries to come. Whenever Japan entered a period of domestic stability, it would aspire to carve out an overseas domain.

Being an archipelago of mountains and hills, the empire's frontiers were tenuous. Government control was strongest in the Kanto all the way to the provinces surrounding the ancient Imperial capital of Kyoto. Meanwhile, much of Northern Japan and the present-day

**"THE SAMURAI CLASS, WHOSE DESIGNATION TRANSLATED TO 'THE ONES WHO SERVE', WERE A PERMANENT FIXTURE IN JAPANESE LIFE FOR AS LONG AS THE SHOGUNATE EXISTED"**

Hokkaido was already occupied by another indigenous group, the Ainu, who were also called Emishi.

Farther south, in the island of Kyushu where the Shimazus ruled Satsuma, Imperial governance was just as weak and sometimes nonexistent. A terrible contrast of Japanese civilisation is its startling homogeneity and social cohesion didn't mitigate the blood feuds between wealthy land-owning families.

An internal barrier to the expansion of the Japanese state was the indigenous Ainu. Having mastered fighting on horseback, these warrior bands were seen as a threat to the towns and villages of the Kanto Plain. The ancient war, the origin of which is lost to memory, was the impetus for Imperial conscription – a practice that resembled China's own method for raising armies – to defeat the Ainu.

These soldiers would eventually adopt the horsemanship of their enemies, and in what was certainly a lengthy evolution, a unique martial art arose from this fighting style involving bow and arrow. Separate disciplines also emerged for single combat, lances and halberds, and various bladed weapons. The brutal refinement that moulded these warriors carried on to their next of kin until martial bloodlines emerged.

When William the Conqueror led his Normans across the English Channel in the latter half of the 11th century, land ownership in Japan was by then monopolised by soldier families who maintained select warriors as bodyguards. As economic power slipped from the emperor's grasp and was aggrandised by these landowners, better known as daimyos, a nasty state of affairs was in the making.

A warrior's upbringing and mind set meant that he could never devote his energies to producing wealth. This meant the only worthwhile pursuit for enhancing power and status in Japan was conquering enemies. This led to the chronic warfare that plagued feudal Japan, with its worst phase being the 200-year civil war known as the Sengoku. It wasn't until the relative peace of the Tokugawa Shogunate which was ushered in by the warlord Ieyasu and his heirs and lasted from 1603 until 1867, that this fratricidal violence ebbed.

The samurai class, whose designation translated to 'the ones who serve', were a permanent fixture in Japanese life for as long as the Shogunate existed. The reason for their existence was codified into Bushido, whose core tenet was unfailing loyalty to the master – a daimyo. Samurai weren't just retainers and warriors, but their groupings functioned as organisations as well.

*Below: Traditionally samurai were adept warriors either on foot or horseback*



# THE BATTLE OF SHIROYAMA

HIS FORCES SCATTERED AND SURROUNDED BY THE IMPERIAL ARMY AFTER THE KUMAMOTO DEBACLE, SAIGO AND HIS SAMURAI ESCAPE TO KAGOSHIMA

## THE PERILOUS PEAK

With just 400 samurai left, Saigo trekked to Kagoshima, moving through hills and mountain trails. The Satsuma capital was once again vulnerable to attack, garrisoned by just 1,000 poorly trained conscripts. However, Imperial reinforcements from land and sea caught up with the rebels, who were forced to nearby Shiroyama.

## THE ENCIRCLEMENT

From Mounsey's account: "The Imperials had completed their lines about the 10th of September, and they then proceeded to erect mortar-barriers, to arm their earthworks with 50-pound guns from the ships, and to shell the rebel position from them and from their men-of-war. The bombardment was carried on day and night, causing a loss of about 200 men in the rebel ranks."

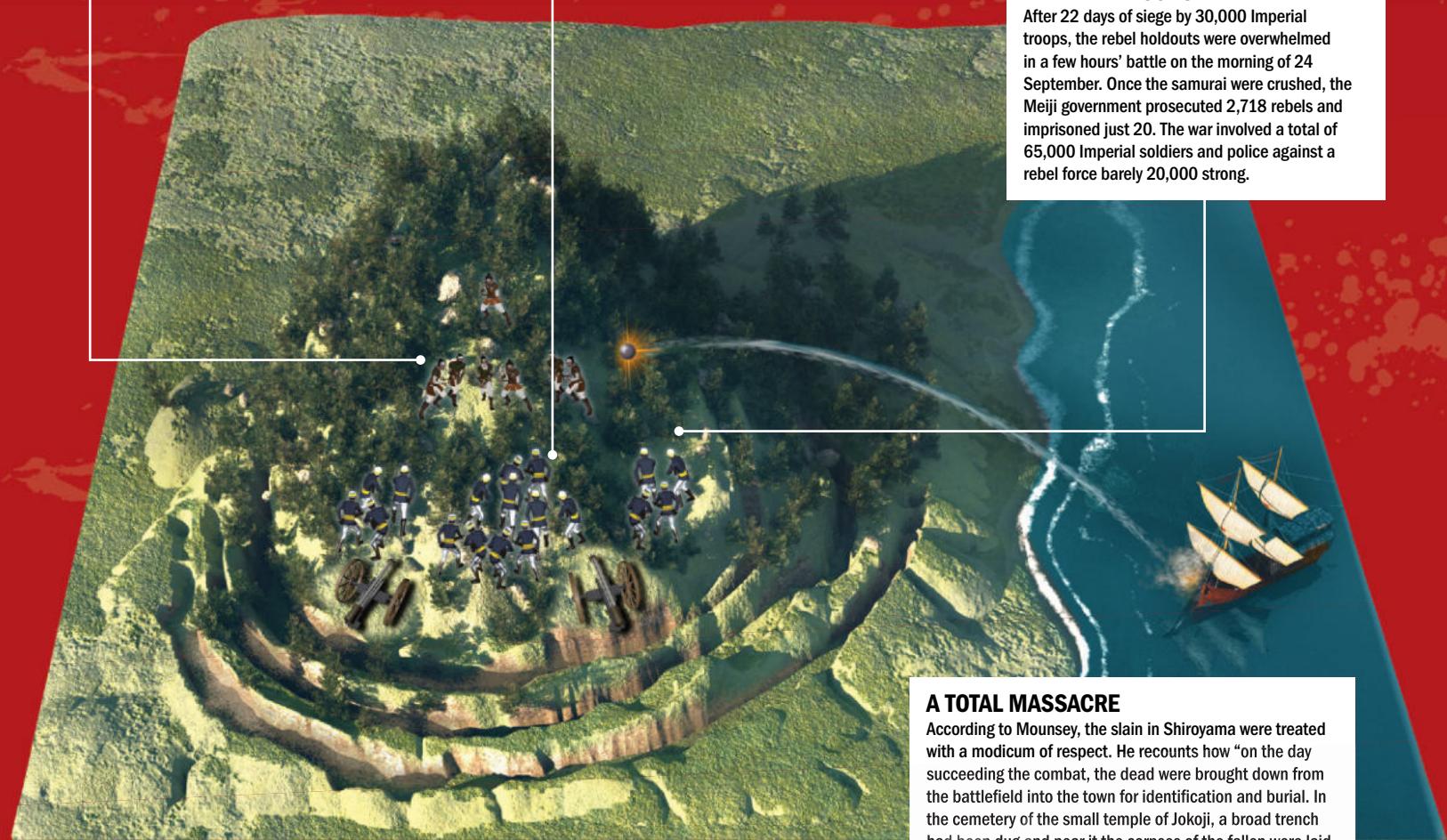
**"65,000 IMPERIAL SOLDIERS AND POLICE AGAINST A REBEL FORCE BARELY 20,000 STRONG"**



Above: Saigo can be seen ordering his men forward in the top right of this drawing of the Battle of Shiroyama

## THE FINAL ASSAULT

After 22 days of siege by 30,000 Imperial troops, the rebel holdouts were overwhelmed in a few hours' battle on the morning of 24 September. Once the samurai were crushed, the Meiji government prosecuted 2,718 rebels and imprisoned just 20. The war involved a total of 65,000 Imperial soldiers and police against a rebel force barely 20,000 strong.



## A TOTAL MASSACRE

According to Mounsey, the slain in Shiroyama were treated with a modicum of respect. He recounts how "on the day succeeding the combat, the dead were brought down from the battlefield into the town for identification and burial. In the cemetery of the small temple of Jokoji, a broad trench had been dug and near it the corpses of the fallen were laid out side by side."



To ensure their place in the social hierarchy, samurai families inter-married and individuals collected lifelong stipends of rice. They were discouraged from any physical labour and, like other warrior classes in feudal societies, martial pursuits like hunting and fencing were preferred diversions.

Yet some samurai did practice trades to augment their incomes and rendered civil service on behalf of their masters. They also had a monopoly on violence, and this was symbolised by the iconic pairing of the single-edged katana with a long knife. The katana's inherent value to samurai was being so well crafted for duelling that no other sword sufficed. Until the right to bear arms was exclusively reserved for samurai, double-edged swords were actually common in Japan.

### The white cross

Like a pendulum, Japan's internal state would swing from one extreme to another as it hurtled towards the modern age. The chaos that reigned in the 200-year Sengoku period, where rival samurai clans vied for power in constant civil war, eventually gave way to the Tokugawa Shogunate's martial peace.

This transition was made possible by an unlikely pairing. First, there was the rise of indomitable samurai warlords, whose psychological mettle gave them the iron will to crush their enemies. It began with the brutal but courageous Oda Nobunaga, who came closest to unifying Japan in the final decades of the 16th century.

**“LIKE A PENDULUM, JAPAN’S INTERNAL STATE WOULD SWING FROM ONE EXTREME TO ANOTHER AS IT HURTLED TOWARDS THE MODERN AGE”**

His work was continued by the madman Hideyoshi Toyotomi, whose dream of subjugating Korea turned into a quagmire. He was replaced by the Machiavellian Tokugawa Ieyasu, whose gift for administration cooled the worst tendencies of the samurai class.

The second force that helped conclude Japan's civil wars were firearms. In 1543, more than half a century before the Tokugawa Shogunate was established, a group of Portuguese sailors arrived in Tanegashima. Ironically, it was an island situated not far from the bustling port of Kagoshima.

These Portuguese, who were either shipwrecked or encountering difficulties navigating local waters, presented a local daimyo with muskets. Another less reliable account suggests Spanish Jesuit missionaries eager to curry favour with their daimyo hosts gifted them with muskets.

The substances of both accounts are credible, since firearms produced in Japan took on a distinct appearance. Japanese smiths, not samurai, had no trouble reverse engineering the small arms that they called tanegashima, which resembled the Spanish arquebus with their curved handles and large bores. The Western European rifle with a complete stock and distinctive firing mechanism never proliferated in Japan.

Once whole companies of musketeers called Teppo-tai (literally “gunmen”) were deployed, their impact was profound. Firearms played a decisive role in the Battle of Sekigahara on 16 October 1600, when Tokugawa Ieyasu's legions

*Above: Saigo can be seen here, in the centre, preparing his men for the impending naval bombardment at the Battle of Shiroyama*

conquered the rival warlord Ishida Mitsunari and his allies.

The Tokugawa state that emerged in 1603 appears an unremarkable one under the Shogunate's bakufu, or administration, that was based in Edo, the greatest city on the Kanto Plain. To mitigate the influence wielded by the emperor, whose rank was purely symbolic, their lives were confined to the boring splendour of faraway Kyoto. A caste system was imposed by the bakufu, with the samurai at the top. Beneath them were peasants and artisans. Ultimately contemptible were the merchants at the bottom who were superior to none but the untouchables: the marginal communities who cured leather and butchered meat.

To discourage conspiracies against the Shogunate, residing in Edo became mandatory for a daimyo's kinsmen. This was an elaborate system of hostage-taking dressed up as social custom. Traditional allies of the Tokugawa's were undisturbed by this practice. The Shimazu's of Kyushu, however, were always uncomfortable with their fealty to the Shoguns. Their crest was a white cross in a white circle, like a crosshair. It was a fitting if unintentional symbol since the Shimazus maintained arsenals of their own muskets and cannon manufactured in Kagoshima.

A streak of mischief always ran in the Shimazu bloodline. Time and time again, their Satsuma domain would figure in a crisis that disturbed the Shogunate. Three years after the beginning of the Tokugawa period, Satsuma samurai overran the island called Okinawa and reduced it to a vassal state.

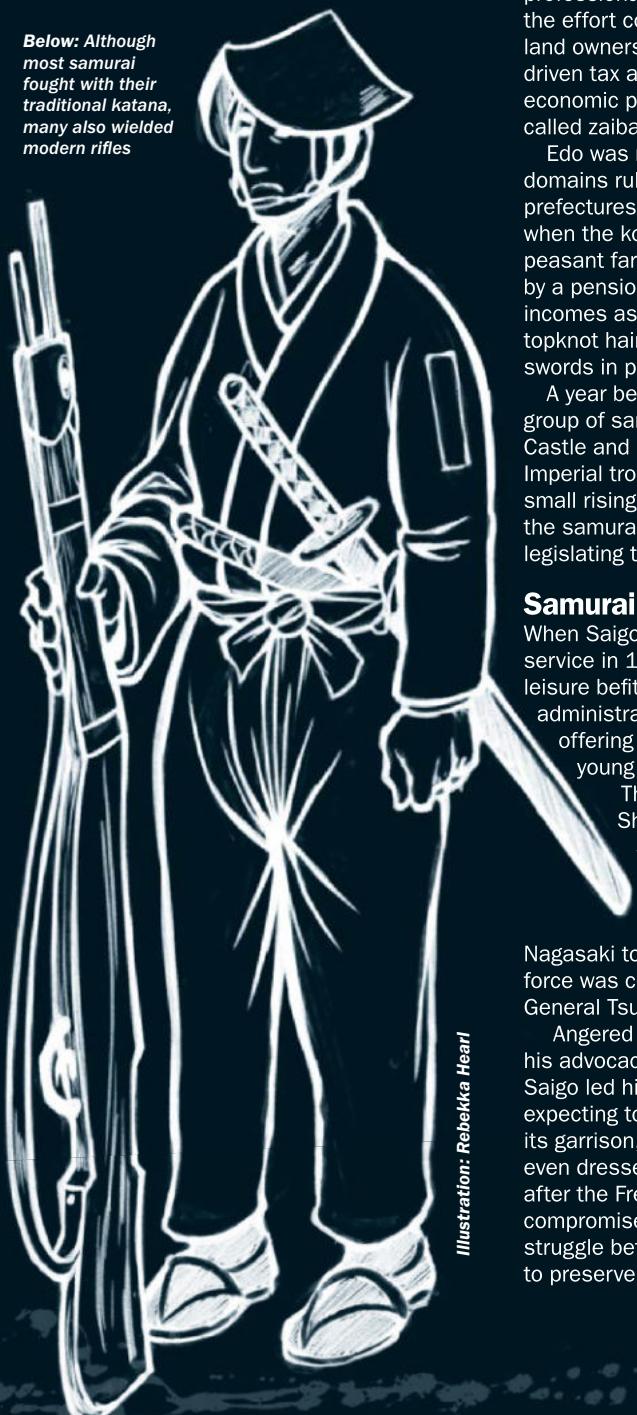
On 3 March 1860, the Shogun Ii Naosuke was assassinated along with his retinue while

## "RISINGS Erupted IN DIFFERENT PREFECTURES AS THE SAMURAI REALISED THE MEIJI GOVERNMENT WAS LEGISLATING THEM OUT OF EXISTENCE"

travelling in Edo. It was believed that vengeful ronin, or rogue samurai, sought to punish him for signing disadvantageous treaties with foreign barbarians, for example Europeans. The Shimazu were fanatical xenophobes and their leader Shimazu Hitsamitsu was implicated in the assault and murder of an Englishman in 1862. The diplomatic outrage provoked by the Shimazu's unrepentant refusal to apologise and compensate the victim's family led to British warships bombarding Kagoshima during the following year.

However, the Shimazu's greatest outrage was their alliance with the Choshu clan to defeat the Tokugawa Shogunate and install the 15-year-old Mutsuhito as the Meiji Emperor. When the clans and daimyos loyal to the Tokugawas rose

*Below: Although most samurai fought with their traditional katana, many also wielded modern rifles*



up against this new order in what was called the Boshin Civil War in 1868 – a conflict that strangely enough inspired a brief secessionist movement in Hokkaido led by samurai wanting to establish a democratic republic – the emperor's own forces were led by Satsuma's ablest commanders: Okubo Toshimichi and Saigo Takamori.

Historians often cite two separate events to explain Japan's shift to modernity. These were the expeditions of the American Commodore Matthew C Perry in 1853 and 1854, followed by what is referred to as the 'Meiji Restoration'. This misses a long period of conflict within Japan's samurai ruling class that ended with the Satsuma rebellion.

When the Meiji Emperor sought to build a professional military with European advisers, the effort coincided with the reorganisation of land ownership, the importation of a money-driven tax and banking system, and a genuine economic plan led by powerful conglomerates called zaibatsus.

Edo was renamed Tokyo and the feudal domains ruled by daimyos were declared prefectures. The daimyos lost their fortunes when the koku, or the rice stipend paid by peasant farmers, was abolished and replaced by a pension. The samurai lost their own incomes as a result. Soon their distinctive topknot hairstyles were forbidden and carrying swords in public was prohibited.

A year before the Satsuma rebellion, a large group of samurai stormed into Kumamoto Castle and slaughtered 300 unsuspecting Imperial troops. This wasn't an isolated case – small risings erupted in different prefectures as the samurai realised the Meiji government was legislating them out of existence.

### Samurai requiem

When Saigo Takamori retired from government service in 1873, he devoted his time to leisure befitting his social status and the administration of shigakko, or private schools, offering civics and paramilitary training for young samurai.

The samurai in the domains of the Shimazu clan, especially those in Satsuma, looked forward to serving the state as its foremost military clan. In 1874, an expedition of 3,000 samurai departed from Nagasaki to invade Formosa (Taiwan). This force was commanded by Saigo's brother, General Tsugumichi.

Angered by Tokyo's callousness toward his advocacy for further foreign expansion, Saigo led his samurai to Kumamoto Castle, expecting to be received by the commander of its garrison, Major General Taketa Tani. Saigo even dressed in his Imperial uniform, patterned after the French style. His goal was to force a compromise with the government. This wasn't a struggle between tradition over modernity, but to preserve the samurai as an institution.

# Final March of the Samurai

**REKNOWNED FOR THEIR MARTIAL SPIRIT AND FIERCE INDEPENDENCE, THOUSANDS OF SATUMA SAMURAI ROSE TO DEFEND THEIR SOCIAL CLASS FROM OBLIVION**

A disturbing lack of foresight and preparation ruined the Satsuma samurai's rebellion against Tokyo. After getting mired in a pointless siege on Kumamoto Castle from 19 February to 12 April, the rebels split into small groups and tried manoeuvring in Western Kyushu. Imperial reinforcements arriving by sea frustrated their mobility – even Kagoshima was captured from them in March.

With their ammunition dwindling, the samurai resorted to guerilla tactics. They also tried holding out in towns and villages that had castles, even though the fortresses weren't provisioned. These barely sufficed at defeating the Imperials, although peasant conscripts suffered terrible losses against veteran samurai. Government casualties numbered 17,000 at the end of the war, with 6,900 killed in battle. Just as many rebel samurai were slain.

By August, Saigo and his retinue were trapped in the town of Miyako-no-jo near the Satsuma frontier. Most of them died in Shiroyama just a month later.



Instead, upon their arrival in Kumamoto, the Satsuma rebels were forced to prosecute a months-long siege and battle the European-trained conscript army sent against them. Tokyo acted swiftly and mobilised 40,000 men under the mysterious Prince Arisugawa Taruhito to pacify the Kyushu rising.

After months of pointless combat, in September 1877, the Satsuma samurai were scattered and defeated. The last holdouts sought refuge in Shiroyama Hill after being unable to recapture Kagoshima. The Imperial army erected barriers, dug trenches and deployed batteries to entrap the rebels. Men-of-war stationed in the harbour trained their own 50-pound guns at Shiroyama.

Soon the terrible day arrived and death claimed Saigo, ignoble and gruesome. Half

his force was killed with him while more than 200 others were either maimed or captured. A day after the massacre at Shiroyama, signs were hung up on all of the notice boards in Tokyo. These public bulletins were an enduring practice from the Tokugawa era and served to inform the masses of official pronouncements. On 25 September, they read: "It is hereby made known that on the 24th, Prince Arisugawa, commander-in-chief of the army of chastisement, reported to his imperial majesty by telegraph that the rebels of Kyushu have been reduced to quiet."

Saigo Takamori's remains were buried in a mass grave together with the rest of Shiroyama's fallen. Upon his return to Tokyo, Prince Arisugawa was thanked by the emperor and awarded the Order of the Chrysanthemum.

The incorrigible samurai of Satsuma were forever humbled, and from then on devoted themselves to the state. Their stock begat generals and war heroes who served with distinction in the Imperial army and navy.

The hidden legacy of Saigo Takamori and his outlaw samurai would resonate in the national consciousness and the national will in the 20th century. Just 18 years after Satsuma industrialised Japan, hungry markets and resources started the first of many wars with China. This set it on course to war in the Pacific and humiliating defeat at the hands of the Allies. Arguably this was the spirit of Satsuma writ large, a timeless episode where glorious struggle and hubris possessed the samurai and doomed them. This is why 1877 is remembered as Gotterdamerung for Japan's warrior class.

# THE OLD AND THE NEW

## HOW WESTERN MILITARY TACTICS WERE ADOPTED BY BOTH IMPERIALS AND REBELS ALIKE TO CLAIM VICTORY ON THE FIELD

Barely lasting eight months, Satsuma was the first great test of the original Imperial Japanese Army. After nearly a decade of being moulded by foreign advisers and the new tactics needed to fight modern wars, the conscript force was unprepared for the conflict with the Satsuma rebels.

Worse, their samurai foes had firearms and artillery too. The deciding factor became mass. Having embraced the institutions of European states, – i.e. a police force, compulsory education, corporations and a parliament – Tokyo could afford levying as many fighting men as it could, peasant and samurai alike, and deploy them to Kyushu for battle.

Another edge the Imperials had over the Satsuma rebels was command of the sea. Despite being a coastal domain, there were no indigenous warships in Satsuma and Kagoshima. This made it easier to transport reinforcements from Nagasaki and Tokyo.

There was significant overlap between the Imperial army and the samurai forces. The latter were just as committed to adopting European weapons; rifles were standard issue for either side. The difference became much more evident in close quarters: the samurai excelled at battling their social inferiors – the Imperial conscripts with peasant backgrounds.

However, the Imperial army was full of samurai too, and it was led by aristocratic samurai officers. As the conflict dragged on, the ranks of the police forces in Satsuma were swelled with samurai from prefectures whose ruling clans were antagonistic toward the rebels. This was a deliberate tactic employed by the Meiji government to finally crush Saigo's forces.

The Imperial army proved its mettle in the encirclement of Shiroyama. This was where all the old modes of warfare, like single combat and

manoeuvre, were discarded. The forces under Prince Arisugawa encircled the remnants of Saigo's rebel army and erected barricades and other obstacles to surround Shiroyama.

In what could possibly be a first in the annals of Japanese warfare until then, the Imperial army softened the rebels' position with an unrelenting artillery barrage. The sheer volume of fire, with an estimated 7,000 shells fired on Shiroyama in 22 days, broke the defenders, who were then completely overrun by infantry columns racing up the slopes in their crisp French uniforms. The ensuing battle was an anti-climactic one, and Satsuma's defiance perished like mountain fog on the morning of 24 September.

This was more than a victory of superior numbers over unbreakable will. It proved that a parochial and localised force was no match against a modern state mobilised for total war.



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# Soviet-Afghan War

The Cold War found a new front line as the USSR stepped in to support the Afghan government in the face of anti-communist guerillas

WORDS TOM FARRELL

**E**ven without the destruction of the hospital in an air strike, the turn of events in Kunduz in late September 2015 would have been a disaster. For the first time since their expulsion by a US-led coalition in 2001, the Taliban were able to capture, albeit temporarily, a large urban area. That the Afghan National Army (ANA) quickly called in US Special Forces, culminating in the bomb strike on the hospital and 22 deaths, hardly bodes well for the future of Afghanistan.

The International Security Assistance Force ceased combat operations in late 2014. The vast, dust-blown sprawl of Camp Bastion, Helmand Province, home to UK forces since 2006, witnessed the lowering of the Union Jack on 26 October. Simultaneously, the United States Marine Corps relinquished command of the adjacent Camp Leatherneck.

In 13 years Britain lost 453 troops in Afghanistan and totted up a bill of £21.5 billion; overall, NATO combat fatalities numbered more than 2,800 with tens of thousands of Taliban killed. Civilian deaths are estimated at about 30,000. In theory, NATO's war in Afghanistan is over; in practice, Western forces have retreated to the peripheries. Under a Bilateral Security Agreement, signed almost at the last moment after endless prevarication by the outgoing President Hamid Karzai, the United States maintains about 9,000 troops in nine Afghan bases – for training and specialised missions in support of the ANA. Recently, the USA's generals have been suggesting a slowdown in their withdrawal; originally it was intended that almost all of them would be gone by the end of Barack Obama's presidency in 2017.

As the last Chinooks roared skyward, there was undoubtedly a sense of *déjà vu* at Camp Bastion. Many a foreign power has seen its armies confounded, bloodied and humiliated

in the mountain passes and fertile plains of Afghanistan. The current president, Ashraf Ghani, pondering the debacle of Kunduz, must struggle not to liken himself to one of his more luckless predecessors, Mohammed Najibullah.

At the end of a decade-long occupancy, the Soviet Union's 40th Army left Afghanistan on 15 February 1989. The last general, Boris Gromov, made an ostentatious show of crossing the bridge that spanned the Amu Darya River, the boundary between Afghanistan and Soviet Uzbekistan. The Moscow-backed Najibullah regime lasted only three more years, despite the presence of Soviet advisers and between \$2 billion and \$6 billion a year in aid.

By 1992-96, competing factions of mujahideen (holy warriors), divided along tribal and ethnic lines, tore into each other, reducing Afghanistan to an impoverished 'failed' state.

They were displaced by the Taliban, fiercely puritanical exponents of the Salafi branch of Sunni Islam, raised in the madrassas (religious schools) of Pakistan. Upon capturing Kabul, one of the Taliban's first acts was to murder Najibullah and his brother, hanging their mutilated bodies up on public display.

### Military quagmire

The Soviet war in Afghanistan is often compared, somewhat inaccurately, to the USA's experience in Vietnam. However, many military and political parallels are striking. Both wars were mainly fought by young conscripts, usually rural and poor, who often became disillusioned by the unwelcoming reception they received from the local population. Both involved helicopter mobility and ground sweeps augmented by air strikes. Both were also predicated on fears that a 'domino effect', whether Marxist or Islamic, would spread through the region.

**INSIDE  
THE LONG  
AFGHAN  
STRUGGLE**

**1919**

The third Anglo-Afghan War ends. Emir Amanullah Khan declares independence from Britain and tries to introduce modernising reforms, which provoke opposition and civil war. He later flees Afghanistan.

**July 1973**

King Zahir Shah is deposed by Mohammed Daoud, ending a 40-year period of monarchy. He attempts to balance American and Soviet influence, extracting aid from both nations.

**28 April 1978**

A communist uprising takes place in Kabul. Soldiers loyal to Nur Mohammed Taraki storm the palace, killing Daoud and most of his family. Land, education and gender reforms begin.

A guerrilla soldier aims a Stinger missile at passing aircraft near a remote rebel base in the Safed Koh Mountains in Afghanistan in 1988



**"Many a foreign power has seen its armies confounded, bloodied and humiliated in the mountain passes and fertile plains of Afghanistan"**



In Afghanistan, as in Vietnam, the military effort was backed up by ambitious endeavours at nation building, the actual reality falling short of anything resembling 'socialism' or 'democracy'. Finally, both armies fought against a backdrop of profound societal change in their parent nations. The Vietnam-era 'grunt' knew that huge swathes of the population back home thought the war to be a mistake and were emphasising the point in the form of mass protests. If anything, the experience of the Soviet dembely (demobbed conscript) was far worse. Returning alone, often at night, to dreary concrete apartment blocks in Moscow, Leningrad, Minsk or Tbilisi, the Afgantsy (veterans) could expect none of the adulation that had bathed their fathers and uncles after the Great Patriotic War against Hitler.

Within a few years, the Soviet Union would have broken apart and the ideological banner under which the Afgantsy performed their 'internationalist duty' consigned to history.

By the time General Gromov crossed the Amu Darya Bridge, the reforming Soviet premier Mikhail Gorbachev admitted that the 40th Army had lost 15,000 dead. Afghan civilian losses topped 3 million refugees festering in vast camps in Pakistan and 2 million in Iran.

For all the analogies with Vietnam, the situation of the Afgantsy often resembled that of the British and French in the Crimea. Life in the bases was characterised by poor sanitation, poor food and threadbare supplies. The Soviets built seven military hospitals in Afghanistan, all of them poorly equipped and undermanned. Later it would be estimated that three-quarters of 40th Army soldiers spent time in hospital, but only 11 per cent were there for combat injuries. Most languished with diseases including hepatitis, typhoid, malaria and dysentery. Drunkenness and the use of locally sourced marijuana or opium sapped army morale. So did institutionalised bullying. Under the dedovshchina (grandfather) system, newcomers, embarking on two-year tours, were required to serve soldiers in their last six months of service, a power dynamic enforced by ferocious beatings and abuse.

Ranged against these troops were highly motivated mujahideen, backed by the United States and Pakistan, capable of picking them off in devastating hit-and-run raids. The Soviets called them dukhi (ghosts).

### Great games

In the last few days of the 1970s, a group of elderly men in Moscow pondered the risks. There had been nearly a decade of somewhat eased relations with the West, known as detente. Now, for the first time since 1945, they were about to deploy the Red Army across the frontiers of the Warsaw pact – the communist bloc's equivalent of NATO.

**"But perhaps more than the threat of American influence – largely imaginary – the Soviets feared the spread of Islamic ideology into the Asian republics of the Soviet Union"**

Leonid Brezhnev, the Communist Party's corpulent and bushy-browed general secretary, had built his powerbase by boosting the Soviet military. Even so, his Chief of the General Staff of the Red Army Nikolai Ogarkov had warned against 'reckless' intervention in Afghanistan.

Deep within the Kremlin, Brezhnev consulted his chief ideologue Mikhail Suslov, KGB Chief Yuri Andropov, Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko and Defence Minister Dmitriy Ustinov on the Afghan crisis.

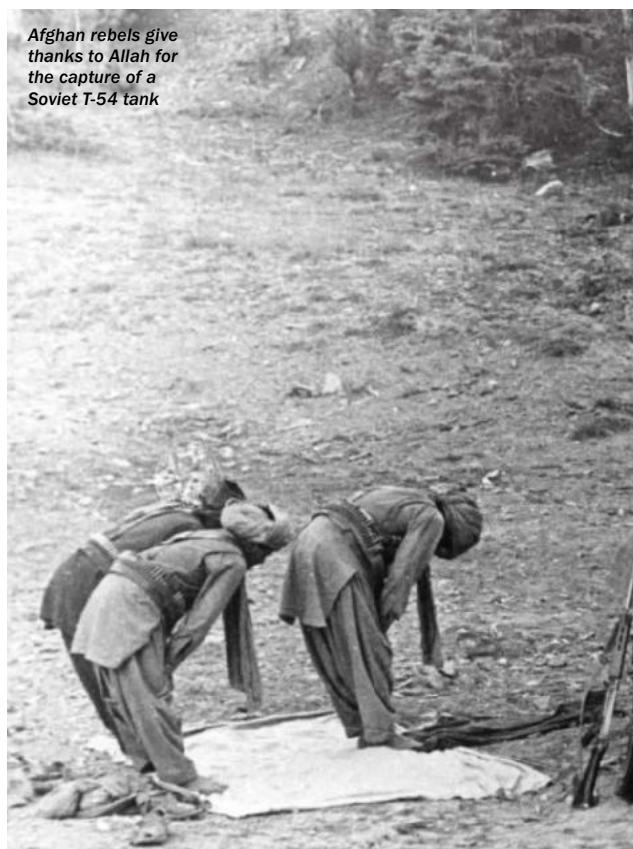
In April 1978, the Marxist Peoples' Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) had seized power in Kabul. The PDPA split into the competing Khalq (Masses) and Parchami (Flag) factions. The Khalq-supported President Nur Mohammed Taraki was an unabashed Stalinist whose land and cultural reforms in the countryside sparked an Islamic rebellion.

In September 1979, Taraki had been summoned to Moscow for consultations with Brezhnev. Upon his return to Kabul, he was arrested and executed by his deputy, Hafizullah Amin. Now it seemed that Amin was attempting to mollify Islamic opinion, perhaps even reach towards the United States, who had begun supplying non-military aid to the mujahideen that July.

Moscow had long sought to influence the mountainous and landlocked nation on its southern flank, its population a patchwork of races, including the Pashtun, Tajik, Uzbek, Hazara and Turkomen. During the 19th century, the British fought wars against the Afghans in 1839-42, 1878-80, as well as in 1919. It was an era when the nation was a playing field of the 'Great Game' and the prize was domination of South Asia and access to the Gulf of Arabia.

But perhaps more than the threat of American influence – largely imaginary – the Soviets feared the spread of Islamic ideology into the Asian republics of the Soviet Union.

Afghan rebels give thanks to Allah for the capture of a Soviet T-54 tank



Two Afghan children play on a destroyed Soviet tank on the road to Jalalabad



### February 1979

US Ambassador Adolph Dubs is kidnapped by Islamic militants posing as police. After his captors barricade themselves in a hotel, he is inadvertently killed in a shoot out with security forces.

### March 1979

Amid widespread Islamic opposition to the secular and socialist nature of Taraki's policies, violent demonstrations erupt in Herat. Soviet advisers and their families are massacred.

### 3 July 1979

The Carter administration authorises the first covert support for the mujahideen, including insurgent propaganda, radio access and money for non-military aid. Many Afghan forces defect to the rebels.



### 14 September 1979

After returning from Moscow, President Taraki is imprisoned by his deputy and suffocated with pillows. Radio Kabul announces his death but not his execution.

### 12 December 1979

After top-level meetings in the Kremlin, the Brezhnev regime decides to send troops to Afghanistan and remove Amin. Some Soviet generals express concern about the scale of the operation but are overruled.



*Below: An Afghan mujahideen fighter fires his AK-47 during street fighting in Kabul*



A few months earlier, a revolution in Iran had swept the US-backed Shah aside. In his place was a Shi'ite theocracy as hostile to 'Godless Marxism' as Western liberalism.

### The course of the war

On Christmas Eve 1979, elite forces began flying into Kabul Airport and the military air base at Bagram. Motorised divisions stormed along the main highways. By 27 December, there were 50,000 Soviet troops in Afghanistan, including 5,000 Spetsnaz (elite forces).

By then, the invaders had destroyed Kabul's main telephone exchanges and seized the radio station and the Ministry of the Interior. After a siege lasting hours, Amin was shot dead in the Presidential Palace. He was replaced by Babrak Karmal from the PDPA's Parchami wing. Karmal's regime lacked any real popular support, and in urban areas its rule was enforced by a KGB-trained police force called the Khadamat-e Aetla'at-e Dawlati (KhAD) led by Mohammed Najibullah.

The war over the next nine years can be roughly divided into two phases. The original Soviet plan was to hold all major bases, cities and roads while sending Karmal's Afghan forces to sweep the mujahideen out of the rural interior. Reports to the Politburo in late 1981 indicated that the mujahideen controlled more than 80 per cent of rural villages.

The Soviets did launch large ground and air offensives themselves. In particular, they launched nine operations into the Panjshir Valley up to 1985. This immense chasm of rock, 100 miles north of Kabul, had a flood plain fertile with mulberry, grapes and apricot.

It was also the stronghold of Ahmad Shah Massoud, a university-educated mujahideen commander whose forces were regularly picking off convoys of troops. But the ground war was doomed by the unreliability of the local Afghan allies: Karmal's forces lost 20,000 men per year through desertion or defection by 1985. Massoud's forces inevitably retook territory cleared by the Soviets.

In the second phase of the war, the Soviets relied on air power, taking a largely defensive posture on the ground. Large-scale ground operations still took place, such as the 1987-88 Operation Magistral, tasked with relieving the besieged city of Khost.

Soviet forces in Afghanistan would peak at 115,000 by 1986, but civilians went there too, sometimes voluntarily: doctors, nurses, architects and engineers. Salaries were generally better than back home but an Afghan posting was no sinecure: Kabul could be shelled about 50 times per day during the mujahideen's spring offensive.

Party activists and the KGB kept tabs on Soviet civilians. However, the risk of kidnapping or assassination, even in the capital, was a

#### 24 December 1979

Elite forces fly into Kabul and Bagram. The 357th and 66th Motorized Rifle Divisions enter from Turkmenistan. The 360th and 201st Divisions cross the Friendship Bridge over the Amu Darya River from Uzbekistan.

#### 27 December 1979

Hafizullah Amin is shot dead in the Presidential Palace after a siege of several hours. Babrak Karmal replaces him as president. Paratroopers seize key buildings in Kabul.

#### 10 January 1980

The Soviet military presence in Afghanistan is condemned at the United Nations' General Assembly emergency special session. Western nations boycott that year's Olympic Games in Moscow.



#### February 1980

Anti-Soviet demonstrations in Kabul turn into riots that leave more than 300 dead. The 40th Army concentrates on securing main roads and building bases near airports.

#### September 1980

Soviet forces launch the first of nine major offensives into the Panjshir Valley, 100 miles north east of Kabul, the stronghold of Ahmad Shah Massoud, a mujahideen from the Tajik minority.

deterrent to wandering out of the Microrayon, a suburb of dreary six-storey concrete apartments built in Kabul for Soviet families and a few high-ranking Afghans. From there, Soviet children were driven to their school in vans, usually with an armed escort. With no air conditioning in the apartments during the sweltering summers, wives and children were permitted a few weeks' vacation in the Soviet Union.

For enterprising civilians who took the risk, however, Kabul's sprawling markets were rich beyond the dreams of the most audacious black marketer in Moscow or Kiev. Jeans, stereo systems, pop music cassettes and other consumer items, proscribed by the Party back home, were readily available, having been trucked up the highways from Pakistan.

By the late 1980s, however, life back home was rapidly changing under the reformer Mikhail Gorbachev. Civilians and military alike returned home to discover the war effort was now discredited, even despised.

### Weapons of war

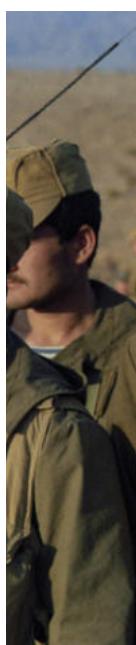
The backbone of the Soviet Army during the Afghan War was the motor-rifle unit – motorised infantry that travelled across the battlefield in armoured personnel carriers called Bronyetransportyors (BTRs). They had a crew of three and could carry eight soldiers.

These units were deployed in four main bases, at Shindand, Kunduz, Kabul and Bagram, each housing a division and other units. Lesser forces were based around Afghanistan but there was a particular concentration around Kandahar, Gardez and Jalalabad, facing the 1,300-mile frontier with Pakistan. To encircle the mujahideen, these mechanised units were boosted as 'hammers' designed to drive the enemy towards 'anvils' of mobile troop units.

However, the Soviets had entered Afghanistan with tactics designed for engaging another mechanised army. One regulation stipulated that reconnaissance squads would travel nine miles ahead of battalions. However, mujahideen ambushes meant that troop units had to fight much closer together.

Later in the war, larger air squadrons enabled more bombardment during operations. Helicopters were used in the staging of surprise attacks. The war horse of the skies was undoubtedly the Mi-24 gunship. Equipped with four rocket pods under its auxiliary wings, it could carry 128 bombs with a full load. Its machine guns could fire 1,000 rounds per minute and its thick armour made it largely immune to heavy or medium machine guns. Few sounds were more dreaded by the civilian population than the drone of an approaching Mi-24 squadron.

The air war caused massive civilian displacement. A particularly reviled weapon was



### 1983-84

The air war escalates. Soviet premier Konstantin Chernenko steps up high-altitude bombing and orders more attacks on mujahideen-held areas. Heavy civilian displacement.

### Early 1985

Washington increases its yearly support to the mujahideen to nearly \$250 million, largely through the pressure applied by CIA director William Casey and Texas (D) Congressman Charlie Wilson.



### 17 October 1985

At a session of the Politburo, the new Soviet premier Mikhail Gorbachev reads letters from citizens expressing concerns about the war. Peace talks in Geneva remain deadlocked.

### September 1986

A convoy of Mi-24 helicopters is attacked by mujahideen with US-manufactured Stinger missiles while returning to base. Over the next ten months, 187 Stingers are used against Soviet aircraft.

### November 1986

Babrak Karmal is replaced as Afghan premier by Mohammed Najibullah, former KhAD head. A month later, Najibullah is summoned to Moscow and told by Gorbachev to prepare for a Soviet pullout within two years.



**Right:** Mohammed Najibullah (right) meets Red Army soldiers on 19 October 1986



*Soviet forces after a combat mission near the village of Tokhram*

## “The introduction of Stingers to the battlefield prompted the Soviet command to issue new flying regulations”

called the ‘butterfly’ bomb, an anti-personnel device with wings designed to float to earth. Air dropped over rebel-controlled areas, it usually blew off limbs when disturbed. Many victims were Afghan children.

Unsurprisingly, Kabul’s pre-war population of 750,000 soon swelled to over 2 million.

### Beginning of the end

It was in the skies that the war began to turn decisively against the Soviets. On 26 September 1986, a convoy of Mi-24 gunships were returning to base in Jalalabad. Suddenly, the lead aircraft exploded in flames. Four more missiles vaulted into the sky, downing two more aircraft. The Stinger, a shoulder-fired, infrared heat-seeking missile had just entered the fray.

US aid to the mujahideen had begun during the Carter administration. However, under Ronald Reagan, the CIA began to funnel hundreds of millions towards the anti-communist Jihad. This was not direct aid: the major conduit was Pakistan’s dictator General Zia ul-Haq and, more specifically, the Pakistani intelligence bureau, Inter Services Intelligence (ISI), who trained 80,000 mujahideen in Pakistan between 1983 and 1987.

That four out of the seven main Pakistan-based mujahideen parties were violent Islamists was something Washington tended to ignore. Indeed, the major recipient of ISI largesse was the fundamentalist Hezb-i-Islami faction of the mujahideen, which frequently attacked other rebel groups and won no significant battles. Its leader Gulbuddin

Hekmaty was (and remains) a leading exponent of global Jihad against the West.

Ahmad Shah Massoud was a more moderate commander who had called a ceasefire in The Panjshir in 1983-84, but his Tajik ethnicity limited his appeal among many Afghan civilians. Moreover, his pragmatism made him unpopular among American politicians.

The Reagan administration had not forgotten – or forgiven – Soviet support for North Vietnam a few years before. Revenge had become an agenda for the USA.

In early 1986, CIA director William Casey summoned his Islamabad station chief Milton Bearden and told him to “go out there and win.” That year, almost \$500 million in US aid poured into Afghanistan. The CIA even imported Texan mules to carry weaponry through Pakistan’s mountain passes.

The introduction of Stingers to the battlefield prompted the Soviet command to issue new flying regulations. Pilots were instructed to fly well above the Stingers’ 13,000-foot ceiling. They were also told to fire deception flares and maintain radio silence. With gunships no longer able to provide close-quarter support, the fighting capacity of ground troops was drastically compromised. But the year of the Stingers’ entry was also the year Gorbachev personally told Najibullah to “forget socialism” and keep a semblance of order in Afghanistan. The Red Army was going home.

### Aftermath

Washington ultimately achieved its objective when General Gromov crossed the Friendship Bridge in February 1989 and Najibullah’s regime collapsed three years later. But Afghanistan in 1979-89 was a war everyone lost, most of all the Afghan people – 1 million of them had been killed and 5 million more made refugees.

The hawkish stance of Russia under Boris Yeltsin and Vladimir Putin in Chechnya, Georgia and eastern Ukraine is at least partly explained by nationalist humiliation over Afghanistan. For its part, the Pentagon preferred to ignore Afghanistan, even as the nation descended into ethnic civil war during the 1990s. The USA’s supposed allies in Pakistan, through the ISI, cultivated the Taliban militia. They in turn provided a haven for the mastermind of the 9/11 attacks, Osama Bin Laden, himself one of the thousands of Islamist volunteers who returned from the Afghan battlefield enflamed by the potential of worldwide Jihad.

A generation on, another foreign army has supposedly ended its combat mission yet retains a presence in a nation whose civil war growls ever onward. Afghanistan is replete with historic lessons, but they seemingly continue to be ignored.

#### November 1987

Operation Magistral begins, one of the last ground operations by the 40th Army. The Soviets succeed in opening the road between Gardez and Khost by early 1988.

#### 14 April 1988

The Soviet Union signs the Geneva Accord along with the United States, Pakistan and Afghanistan. The Soviets agree to begin withdrawing troops in May. The Accord also covers the return of refugees and normalising diplomatic relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan.

#### 15 February 1989

The last Soviet commander of the 40th Army General Boris Gromov is filmed crossing the Friendship Bridge over the Amu Darya River. The Soviets admit a combat death toll of more than 15,000.

#### 5 March 1989

A combined force of mujahideen and Arab volunteer fighters, funded and armed by Pakistan, attempt to capture Jalalabad. Najibullah’s forces hold the city and the offensive is abandoned after three months.

#### April 1992

Months after the breakup of the Soviet Union, Najibullah is overthrown. Afghanistan descends into renewed civil war by competing mujahideen. Kabul is reduced to ruins by shelling during the next four years.

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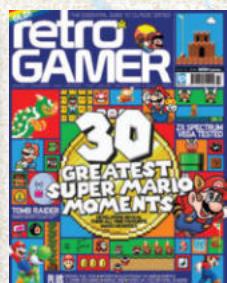
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## Heroes of the Medal of Honor

# DANIEL DALY

A veteran of some of the bloodiest conflicts of the 20th century, Sergeant Major Daniel Daly has become a US Marine legend

WORDS DOM RESEIGH-LINCOLN

Like many individuals who would survive the much photographed and filmed wars of the burgeoning 20th century, Daniel Daly cared little for the fame or legacy his actions brought him. He was, up until his death on 27 April 1937, a man who saw medals as "foolishness," but his actions during the Siege of International Legations in China and a bloody battle in Haiti more than a decade later have made him a legend in the annals of the US Marine Corps.

Born on 11 November 1873, Daniel Joseph Daly was raised in Glen Cove, New York. A city now, but a small village at the time, Glen Cove had blossomed from a diminutive port for English traders in the 1600s to a thriving holiday resort community for New York City residents. The young Daly, like many boys at the time, spent most of those youthful years getting into trouble. He often worked as a newsboy, before turning his fists to better use as a semi-professional boxer. Daly himself was never too open about the particulars of his childhood, but one thing was certain: his life didn't truly begin until he enlisted into the US military on 10 January 1899.

So what had brought Daly from a rough and tumble life on the streets of NYC to the US Marine Corps? The answer was simple: the Spanish-American War. When US forces intervened in the bloody Cuban War for Independence (which had remained under Spanish control for centuries), war was declared to decide the fate of the Cuban people. Daly, hungry for the chance to see action up-front, enlisted and was shipped off to Brooklyn Navy Yard – however, the war itself lasted barely ten weeks and was over by the time Daly emerged from training.

Now a private, Daly was deployed aboard the USS Newark in May 1900. China was in the grip

of the Boxer Rebellion, an anti-Christian and anti-West movement that had driven hundreds of civilians and soldiers into the Legation Quarter of Peking (now Beijing). The Boxers, supported by the ruling Qing government, laid siege to the city, so an international relief effort was organised. Daly was bound for Taku Bay, where he would meet up with the rest of the US Marines and march towards the capital.

*Below: Daly remains one of the US Marine Corps' most decorated soldiers, having won the Medal of Honor twice and the Distinguished Service Cross*



The US Marines, along with German forces, were positioned on the Tartar Wall that surrounded the entire city. Chinese attacks eventually forced the Germans off the wall on 30 June, leaving the small contingent of Marines behind to defend it on their own. The Qing soldiers and Boxer rebels were relentless and it seemed the wall would eventually fall. On 14 August, with the wall itself in disarray, it was clear it needed to be repaired if it were to be held any longer.

Daly volunteered to defend it, crawling on his own to a vantage point and using his bolt-action Lee rifle to hold back the advancing Chinese soldiers. Legends say Daly killed almost 200 enemy combatants single-handedly that day – while hearsay has likely exaggerated that number, it is believed that the real number would have still been quite considerable.

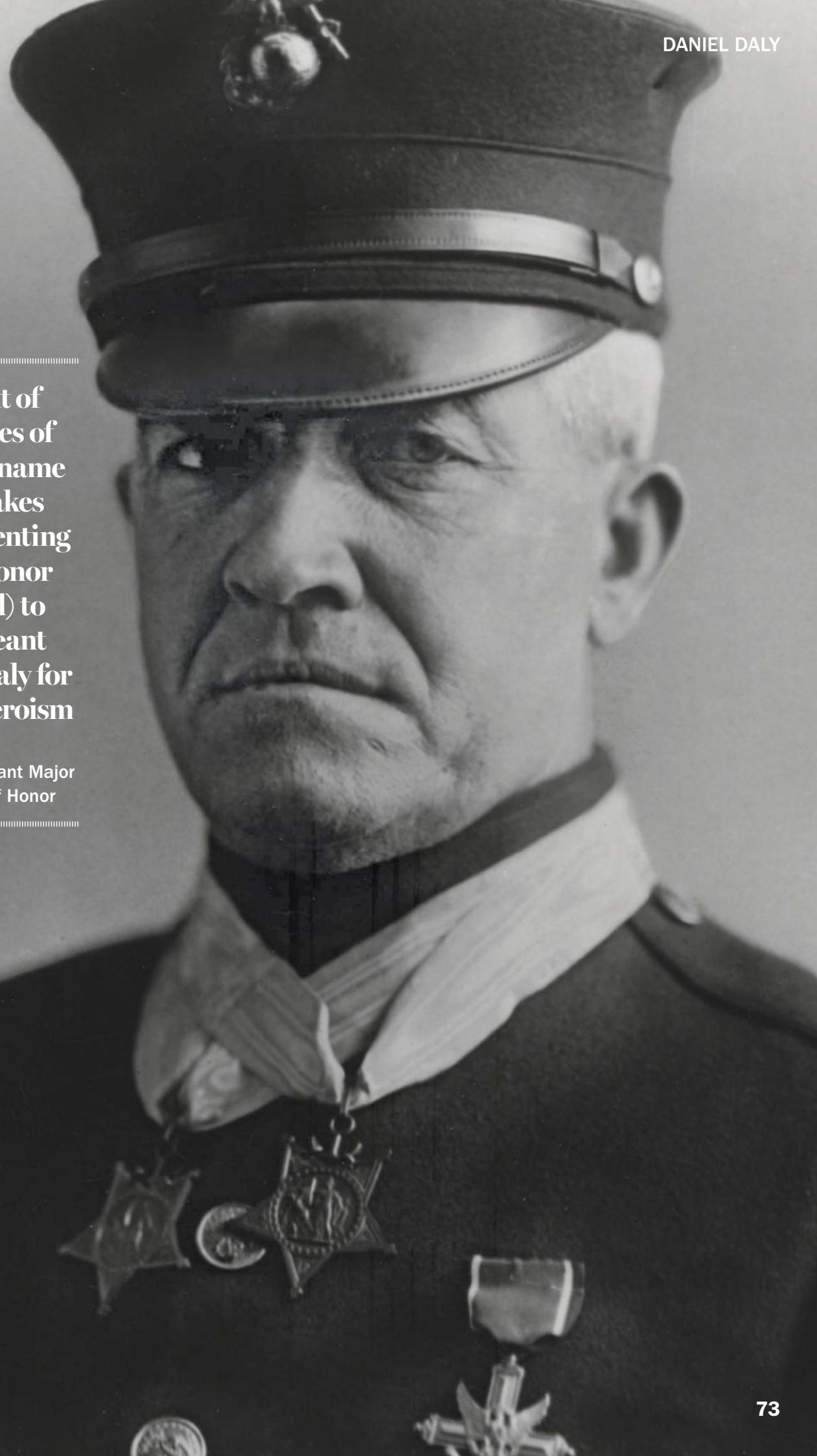
His actions didn't go unnoticed by his superiors and he was rewarded with the most prestigious honour the US military could bestow – the Medal of Honor – in 1901. His second commendation for the medal came 15 years later as he and his fellow Marines stared into the jaws of death during the US invasion and occupation of Haiti.

Between 1911 and 1915, the government of Haiti changed a staggering six times, all of which had been facilitated by coups by 'cacos' (separatist rebels based in the mountains to the north of Haiti). The US government had also become concerned with the influence that Germany was having over the region, helping accelerate certain coups in order to gain valuable trade agreements. By 1915, the country was in a state of perpetual chaos – in response, the Haitian-American Convention was ratified (which saw the last remnants of the pro-US Haiti government handing over de facto security of the country to the US).

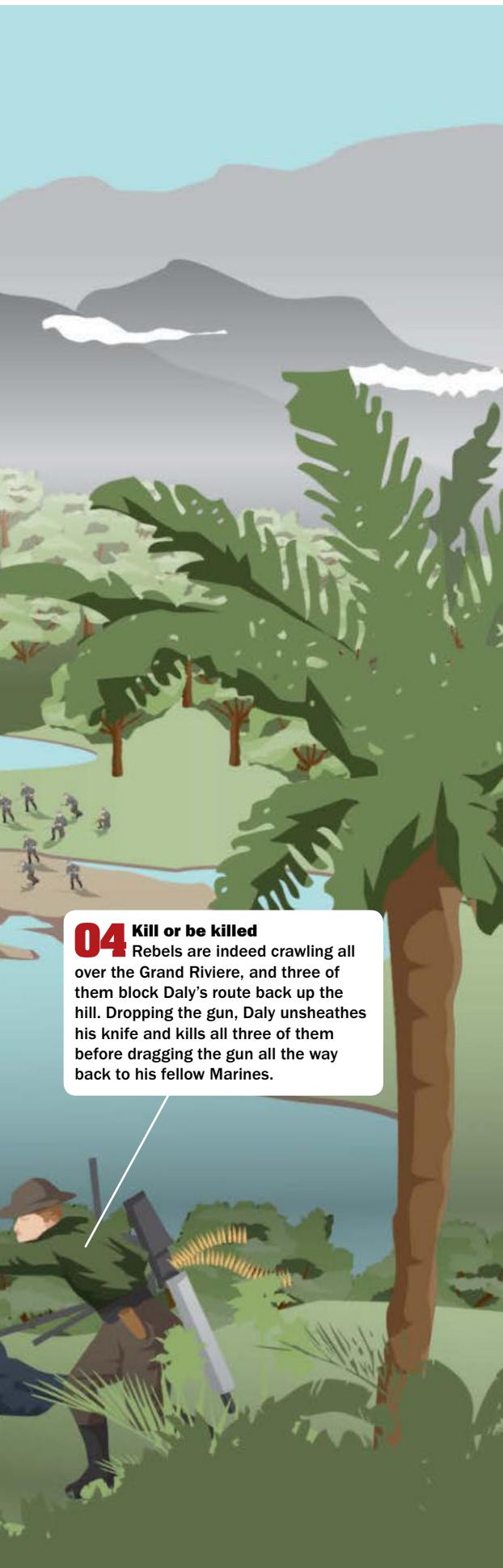
*Despite his diminutive size (he was five foot four inches in height and about 132 pounds in weight), Daly struck a powerful and authoritative figure in the Marine Corps*

“The President of the United States of America, in the name of Congress, takes pleasure in presenting the Medal of Honor (Second Award) to Gunnery Sergeant Daniel Joseph Daly for extraordinary heroism in action”

Official citation for Sergeant Major Daly's second Medal of Honor







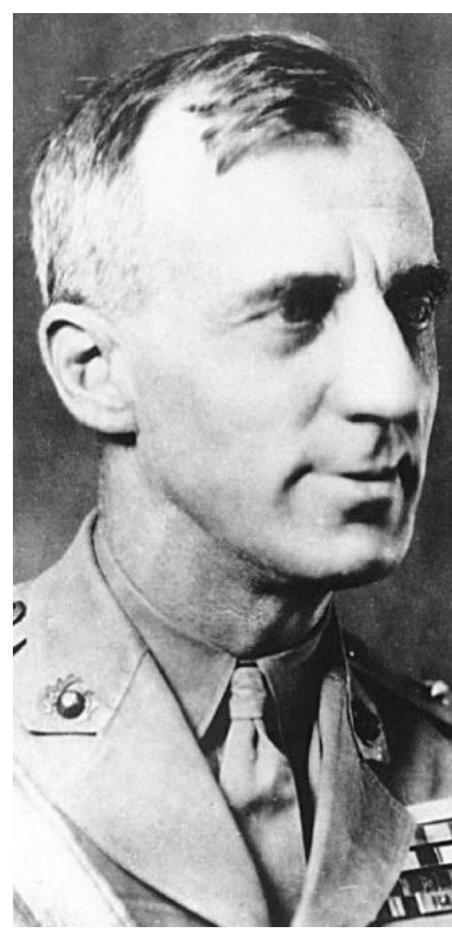
## “Come on, you sons of b\*\*\*hes, do you want to live forever?”

Daniel Daly, June 1918

Now a gunnery sergeant, Daly was well into his second decade of military service when the call to sail to Haiti was green-lit. The United States was to occupy the country and restore order, but it wouldn't be an easy task – the same cacos that had reformed the government by force so many times in the past weren't going to stand idly by while US forces 'invaded' their homeland.

By 24 October 1915, the attempts to stabilise the Dominican Republic's neighbour continued to struggle as the Haitian rebels fought the US forces at every turn. Gunnery Sergeant Daly was now stationed at a military outpost known as Fort Liberte under the command of future Medal of Honor-awardee Marine Major Smedley Butler. Smedley planned to scout out and destroy a nearby Haitian outpost, Fort Dipitie, which was separated from Liberte by a web of small rivers known as the Grand Riviere. A group of about 40 Marines, including Daly, were tasked with crossing the rivers to conduct reconnaissance with a set of horses and a single machine gun.

*Below: Sergeant Major Smedley Butler, Daly's superior during the Battle of Fort Dipitie, was also awarded a Medal of Honor for his actions in the operation*



However, the rebels were already guarding the Grand Riviere and the 400-strong contingent of cacos soldiers unleashed their ambush in the middle of their mission. The location itself was a bowl of sorts with the rebels holding higher ground. Daly and the other men returned fire, but the rebels had the advantage. However, one of the Marines had been injured and the machine gun had been lost, the horse beneath shot dead by a rebel bullet. The Marines pulled back to higher ground and hunkered down, returning fire at the approaching rebels.

The cacos attacked again a few hours later, intending to slaughter the Marines before they could return to the safety of Fort Liberte. As the cacos continued to blanket the Marines with fire, Daly once again volunteered to do the near impossible: recover the lost machine gun. Without it, the Marines wouldn't survive. In other words, if the rebels didn't shred the Americans with bullets, their bayonets would make short work of them at close range.

Daly, still under fire from the rebels, snuck away towards the site of the original ambush while his fellow Marines continued to hold the Haitians back. He then cut the machine gun from the back of the dead horse, heaved it onto his back and carried it single-handedly back to the battle. On his way, he was attacked by three rebels, but Daly wasn't going to go down without a fight – he killed every last one with nothing but a knife before making his way back. With the machine gun set up in their position, Daly and the Marines were able to drive back the rebels.

With the machine gun making all the difference, Major Butler ordered a counter-attack at first light on 25 October. The Marines, sensing the changing tide, charged the group, splitting into three groups and attacking the retreating rebels. A total of 75 cacos were killed by the end of the battle, and the collapse of the attack eventually led to the fall of Fort Dipitie and a victory during the Battle of the Grand Riviere that followed.

Daly would go onto play an equally vital role in World War I – his actions against the Germans during the Battle of Belleau Wood in 1918 once again inciting devotion in his men. He was said to have uttered the iconic line: "Come on, you sons of b\*\*\*hes, do you want to live forever?" While Daly himself insisted that he actually shouted "for Christ's sake men, come on! Do you want to live forever?" the phrase became something of a mantra for the US Marine Corps.

Daly was soon awarded his second Medal of Honor for his valour in Haiti and the Distinguished Service Cross for his courage in France in 1918. By the end of his military career in 1929, Daly had become one of the most decorated soldiers in US military history and a legend in the long timeline of the US Marine Corps.

# Clash OF Koreas

WORDS TOM FARRELL

After being split along the 38th parallel, the Koreas remain at war after nearly seven decades

**W**ar zones are not usually good for nature conservation, but the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) – a 250 kilometres long by four kilometres wide buffer zone between the Koreas – is an exception. There has been so little human activity there over the past few decades that endangered plant and animals have found a haven.

Elsewhere in the DMZ, however, the land is topped by barbed wire, watchtowers and anti-tank traps. Innumerable land mines lie under it and a ferocious concentration of artillery is pointed at it. On either side are the 490,000 troops of the southern Republic of Korea Army (ROKA) and the more than 1.2 million troops of the northern Korean Peoples' Army (KPA). Incidents between the two regularly take place near the DMZ and its maritime equivalent, the Northern Limit Line (NLL) in the Yellow Sea.

In the nightmare scenario, a ROKA-KPA clash will escalate into a more general conflagration, perhaps all-out war. One such incident occurred on 20 August 2015 when the KPA launched artillery rounds at a ROKA base in the town of Yeoncheon, 60 kilometres north of Seoul. At the time, South Korea had resumed an old tactic of broadcasting anti-regime propaganda into North Korea. The South Koreans fired back with 155mm howitzers. Earlier that month, two ROKA troops had been injured by a land mine near the DMZ; North Korea denies the accusation that its military planted the mine.

Small-scale clashes like these occur at least every few weeks, a major crisis every few years. A quarter of a century has passed since the end of the Cold War – at least in the rest of the world. In Korea, it seems as if time has stopped flowing. But the Korean War of the early 1950s was more than just another super power showdown. Rather, the war was the most bloody and international phase of a civil war that began in 1948 and continues today.

The two Koreas remain at war. In July 1953, at Panmunjom, the international combatants,

locked in military stalemate, were able to sign a face-saving armistice that allowed for the exchange of POWs and a cessation of hostilities. Their local allies, with rival capitals in Seoul and Pyongyang, have never signed a formal peace agreement.

This is a tragic irony, especially as Korea, unlike so many other conflict zones, is not a jigsaw of races and faiths. Despite a common language, customs and culture, geography and geopolitics has kept the country partitioned.

In 1945, just as they quarrelled over Germany's empire in the West, so the Americans and Soviets competed for Japan's possessions in the East. The Korean peninsula, a former Japanese colony, was bisected along the 38th parallel of latitude, with the Red Army controlling a communist North and the United States administering the South. By mid 1948, rival states had been established. Border clashes began almost immediately. Two years later, with the covert backing of Stalin, the North's Kim Il-sung attacked the South, with the resulting war leaving 2.5 million dead.

Seven decades after partition, his grandson, Kim Jong-un, is believed to have about six crude nuclear devices at his disposal and possibly the ballistic capability to deliver them. However, a nuclear war is a hypothetical scenario. Since 1953, a very real war has ground on, across land, air and sea.

## Dynastic rule

To most outsiders, North Korea seems like an aberration in the early-21st century: a xenophobic fortress state, run by a family dynasty with a founding Suryong (Great Leader) who began his reign as a despot and ended it as a deity. Except that he hasn't: although Kim Il-sung these days lies motionless within a glass sarcophagus in a giant palace on Pyongyang's outskirts, the 1998 constitution of North Korea made him 'President for Eternity'. Every adult must wear a badge bearing



A propaganda poster seen in Pyongyang, the capital of the DPRK

“A QUARTER OF A CENTURY HAS PASSED SINCE THE END OF THE COLD WAR – AT LEAST IN THE REST OF THE WORLD. IN KOREA, IT SEEMS AS IF TIME HAS STOPPED FLOWING”



## "KIM IS LAUDED AS A FATHER FIGURE OF UNIMPEACHABLE VIRTUE AND WISDOM"



The statues of Kim Il-sung (left) and Kim Jong-il on Mansu Hill in Pyongyang

## THE JOINT SECURITY AREA (JSA)



The Joint Security Area (JSA) is an island of supposed neutrality within the vast ribbon of the DMZ. Three blue UN buildings, once used for negotiations, straddle a thin slab of concrete called the Military Demarcation Line (MDL).

They now largely remain empty as ROKA and KPA soldiers, trained in Taekwondo, strike belligerent poses on either side of the MDL.

The original village of Panmunjom, bombed to ashes during the war, was located about half a mile north of the enclave. All that now remains is the hastily constructed pavilion where the armistice was signed, now the North Korean Peace Museum.

Approaching the JSA from the south, visitors pass Daesong-dong, a heavily subsidised farming village and the only civilian settlement within the DMZ. Male residents of Daesong-dong are exempt from military service but a curfew falls at 11pm. A UN checkpoint, abandoned in the 1980s, leads to the 'Bridge of No Return', the bridge across which tens of thousands of UN and communist prisoners were exchanged during Operations Little Switch (April 1953) and Big Switch (April-September 1953). The last time the bridge served this purpose was in December 1968 when the crew of the USS Pueblo were released from captivity.

The MDL is now flanked by two expansive buildings, the Pammungak Pavilion to the North and Freedom Pagoda in the South. The United Nations Command Security Battalion (UNCSB-JSA) is tasked with enforcing the terms of the armistice. Over six decades, the American contribution has been scaled down: since 2004, a ROKA battalion has assumed full responsibility for the JSA and its commander is deputy of UNCSB-JSA.



his likeness. The Roman calendar was abandoned in the 1990s in favour of one that begins in 1912, the year of Kim's birth.

Grinning down from innumerable posters, immortalised in bronze in every public space, Kim is lauded as a father figure of unimpeachable virtue and wisdom. Having seen off the Japanese and American imperialists, Kim built an earthly paradise, an island of plenty in a sea of want. Today, the propaganda seems ludicrous, even grotesque. In the years immediately after his death, North Korea was gripped by the last great famine of the 20th century.

North Korea's 'Dear Leader' Kim Jong-il inherited a Soviet-style command economy from his father in 1994. Unwilling to open it to the outside world, North Korean industry and agriculture went into freefall under his watch; 2 to 3 million people perished.

Today, under the rule of Kim's 32-year-old grandson, North Korea vanishes by night. Night-time satellite images of the peninsula turn South Korea into an island, a claw of luminosity seemingly hacked off the East Asian landmass. North Korea remains, literally, in the Dark Ages.

### Home-grown ideology

The North's economy grew faster than the South's in the decades after 1953. Following his calamitous war, Kim Il-sung was kept in power only with the backing of China and the Soviet Union, both of which bordered his northern frontier. Meanwhile, following the armistice, the United States deployed tactical nuclear weapons just over the DMZ. After

January 1958, nuclear-capable 'Honest John' MGR-1 surface-to-surface missiles and M-65 Atomic Cannon were on South Korean soil.

North Korea's geographical position was uniquely dangerous, but for Kim, uniquely advantageous. Sandwiched between both halves of the Cold War, and later, both sides of the Sino-Soviet schism, he could simultaneously play upon a deep belligerence towards the West while extracting the maximum amount of aid from Moscow and Beijing.

The former was hardly a difficult task. North Korean art exults in martial themes: yelling MiG pilots and flag-waving KPA soldiers are depicted shooting their way to glory. But in July 1953, North Korea was a wasteland. Hundreds of thousands of its people were dead. The mostly American UN aircraft had flown 720,980 sorties against North Korea during the war, dropping 476,000 tons of ordnance. "We burned down every town in North Korea," boasted the commander of the Strategic Air Command General Curtis LeMay. During the war's largest air raid on 29 August 1952, Pyongyang was levelled by a 1,403 sortie assault.

In June 1953, the US Airforce bombed irrigation dams and the retaining walls of the North's Toksan reservoir, flooding towns and destroying agriculture, an act considered a war crime when the Nazis had done something similar in the Netherlands a few years before. However unnerving the anger in North Korean propaganda, it is hardly surprising.

Kim sought to build an economy based on heavy industry after 1953. Like Joseph Tito in Yugoslavia, he was a former guerrilla, distrustful of getting too close to one

# WAR IN KOREA

A largely forgotten conflict that pitched the United Nations against the communist powers and threatened to go nuclear

The war that erupted on the Korean peninsula in the summer of 1950 was technically known as a 'police action', the first major challenge to the newly formed United Nations. Today, it is a largely forgotten war, despite leaving more than 2 million soldiers and civilians dead. Certainly, compared to the United States' other great East Asian conflict, where Cold War politics turned lethally hot, Korea's cultural imprint seems negligible.

While the Vietnam War inspired a slew of Hollywood blockbusters, the movie treatment of Korea is largely confined to *The Manchurian Candidate* (1962) and *M\*A\*S\*H* (1970). Yet it can be argued that, after the Cuban Missile Crisis, the 'forgotten war' was the closest the world ever came to a nuclear war. The United States might have recognised the seeds of later defeat in Vietnam. Committed – in theory – to fighting a limited war against an enemy prepared to fight total war, the US lost nearly as many military dead in three years fighting in Korea as they would in Vietnam over nearly a decade. Washington also discovered the problems inherent in supporting a corrupt and incompetent regime



In 1951, a Korean refugee with her brother on her back trudges by a stalled M-26 tank, at Haengju, Korea

that traded on anti-communism. Korea did not inspire sit-ins on the US's campuses, large-scale demonstrations or the ire of celebrities and the mainstream media. But after three years, the war was unpopular enough for president elect Dwight Eisenhower to fulfil the promise of his campaign speech: "I shall go to Korea" and sue for peace.

In June 1950, with the covert go-ahead of Moscow, Kim Il-sung's armies stormed over the 38th parallel of latitude, four lines of T-34 tanks mauling the ill-prepared forces of Dr Syngman Rhee's southern regime. A token US presence at Osan (today near to the base of the Pacific Air Force's 51st Fighter Wing) was badly mauled. An American-led UN task force was assembled, led by General Douglas MacArthur. 16 other nations provided fighting troops; Britain's 27th and 29th Brigades would sustain 1,078 fatalities in Korea.

For the first few weeks, the UN held the Pusan Perimeter on the south east extremity of the peninsula. MacArthur masterminded an amphibious assault on the port of Inchon in October 1950, cutting Kim's over stretched armies in half and allowing UN forces to retake the southern capital of Seoul.

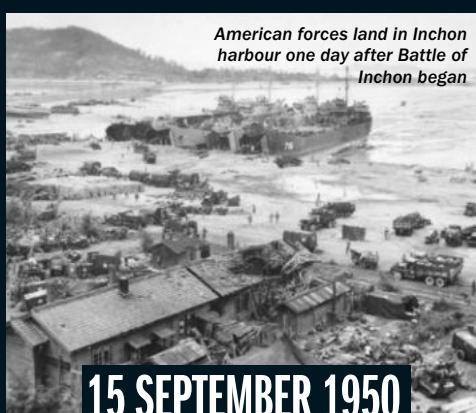
But as UN forces pushed into North Korea, MacArthur made ever more belligerent statements, threatening nuclear war with China. Eventually, he was dismissed by President Harry Truman and replaced by General Matthew Ridgway. By then, 300,000 Chinese 'volunteers' had crossed the River Yalu, pushing back UN forces. Seoul fell to communist forces and was retaken once more. The war settled into two years of gruelling attrition before an armistice – but not a formal peace treaty – was signed in Panmunjom, site of the current JSA.

## KEY DATES



25 JUNE 1950

Since formal partition in mid 1948, there had been regular border clashes along the 38th parallel of latitude that formed the border between the two Koreas. During the early 1950s, North Korea's Kim Il-sung had sought Stalin's backing for invasion. This was granted with the understanding that the South would be quickly overrun and the Soviets would send no troops. North Korean tanks and troops crossed the border on this date but their historians have always claimed they were acting defensively against South Korean aggression.



15 SEPTEMBER 1950

Despite reservations by the joint chiefs of staff as well as key naval officers and many other generals, the UN Supreme Commander General Douglas MacArthur advocated a surprise attack on the port of Inchon, South Korea. On 15 September, the 5th Marines stormed ashore at 'Green Beach' on Wolmi-do island; later that day, landing craft discharged thousands more troops. The 1st and 5th Marines linked up ashore the next day and began an eastward drive. Seoul was retaken on 27 September but was heavily damaged in the process.



27 JULY 1953

After three years of conflict, the Korean War formally came to an end as an armistice was signed in the village of Panmunjom at 10am. It was signed by General Nam Il for North Korea and General William Harrison Jnr, the head of the United Nations Command (UNC) delegation. In separate ceremonies, it was also countersigned by UNC Commander-in-Chief General Mark W Clark in Munsan and Northern Korean premier Kim Il-sung, as well as Marshal Peng Dehuai of the Chinese People's Volunteer Army in Kaesong.

## 1 23 JANUARY 1968 THE CAPTURE OF USS PUEBLO

The USS Pueblo-AGER II, an environmental research vessel converted for intelligence gathering, is accused by the North Koreans of intruding into their waters when it is approached and challenged by a sub-chaser. Washington claims that it is in international waters. However, the North Korean vessel opens fire and gives chase, accompanied by torpedo boats and MiG fighters. One of the 83-man crew is killed before Pueblo is boarded. The sailors had stalled for time and attempted to destroy classified documents and machinery. They would not be released until 23 December, by which time they had been imprisoned, tortured and paraded before communist-bloc media. The North Koreans managed to coerce letters of apology from the captain, Lloyd 'Pete' Bucher, and the US government, the latter being retracted as soon as the sailors were released.



Above: The crew of USS Pueblo arrive at the UN Advance Camp, DMZ, on 23 December 1968

## 2 15 APRIL 1969 SPY PLANE SHOT DOWN

The US Navy Lockheed EC-121 Warning Star is shot down by two North Korean MiG-21 fighters 167 kilometres off the North Korean coast, with the deaths of its entire 31-man crew. This is the biggest loss of life for a US air crew during the entire Cold War. The mission formed part of the 'Beggar Shadow' intelligence-gathering mission wherein the US Navy's reconnaissance aircraft would listen in on communist communications over international waters. Washington did not respond militarily, but conducted reconnaissance. However, the National Security Council and joint chiefs of staff did consider several options, including air strikes against North Korea.



## 3 18 AUGUST 1976 AXE MURDERS AND OPERATION PAUL BUNYAN

Two American soldiers are mortally wounded by attacking KPA soldiers as they and ROKA troops attempt to fell a tree that obscures Command Post 3, the JSA's northernmost observation point. On 21 August, Operation Paul Bunyan commences. Two six-man units from the US Army Corps of Engineers enter the JSA bearing chainsaws, each accompanied by army support units and backed by two dozen attack helicopters. Aircraft patrols are launched from bases all across South Korea and the USS Midway cruises the coast. The tree is felled but thereafter the JSA could not be crossed. Until August 1976, unarmed soldiers from both sides could circulate within the JSA.



# MAJOR INCIDENTS IN THE KOREAN CONFLICT SINCE 1953



**11 DECEMBER 1969**

A North Korean agent hijacks Korean Airlines Flight YS-11 with four crew and 47 passengers. 11 South Korean crew and passengers remain in North Korea today.

**15 NOVEMBER 1974**

The first of four (known) tunnels under the DMZ is inadvertently discovered by a South Korean patrol. It runs for about one kilometre and would allow the passage of 2,000 North Korean troops per hour.

**2 NOVEMBER 1966**

One South Korean and six American soldiers are killed by KPA during an ambush south of the DMZ. Beginning of three-year border conflict.

**17 JANUARY 1968**

A 31-man North Korean detachment crosses the DMZ and attempts to assassinate South Korean President Park Chung-hee at the Blue House parliament building in Seoul.

**16 FEBRUARY 1958**

North Korean agents hijack a South Korean airliner during an internal flight and fly it to North Korea. Eight of the 27 passengers are never returned.

**17 DECEMBER 1994**

An American OH-58 Kiowa, lost in fog, strays north of the DMZ where it is shot down. Chief Warrant Officer David Hileman is killed; Warrant Officer Bobby Hall is captured and forced to sign a confession before his release on 30 December.

**18 SEPTEMBER 1996**

A disabled North Korean submarine is spotted on the east coast of South Korea, near Gangneung. 13 North Korean commandos who escaped are tracked down and killed over 49 days.

**4 26 MARCH 2010  
THE SINKING OF THE CHEONAN**

At 9.22pm, the 1,200-ton Republic of Korea Navy corvette Cheonan (Heaven's Peace) is on patrol near Baengnyeong Island when it explodes and breaks in half. The vessel is in contested waters 20 kilometres from the North Korean coast; out of a 104-man crew, 58 are rescued and 46 die. An investigation into the sinking by South Korean and international experts concludes that the Cheonan was sunk by a torpedo, fired from a North Korean mini-submarine – a charge the North denied. The South Korean Navy is now seeking to bolster its 13-submarine fleet and has recently boosted coastal naval artillery defences.



Above: Officials look upon the salvaged wreckage of the ROKS Cheonan

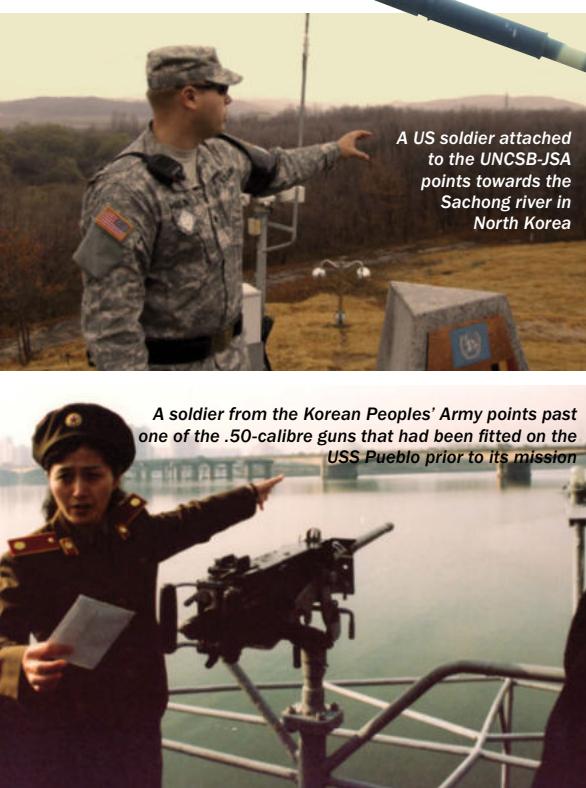
**"EXPERTS CONCLUDED THAT THE CHEONAN WAS SUNK BY A TORPEDO, FIRED FROM A NORTH KOREAN MINI-SUBMARINE"**

**5 23 NOVEMBER 2010  
NORTH KOREAN ARTILLERY SHELLS YEONPYEONG ISLAND**

Naval clashes had occurred near the island, which is close to the disputed Northern Limited Line (NLL) in 1999 and 2002. This attack came following a South Korean artillery exercise nearby. During the bombardment, North Korea fires about 170 shells at the island, killing two South Korean Marines and two civilians. South Korea returns fire, causing an unknown number of casualties to the North, and the island is temporarily evacuated. The United Nations condemns the action as one of the most serious violations of the 1953 armistice.



Above: A civilian house that has been reduced to rubble after the shelling of Yeonpyeong Island



A US soldier attached to the UNCSB-JSA points towards the Sachong river in North Korea

A soldier from the Korean Peoples' Army points past one of the .50-calibre guns that had been fitted on the USS Pueblo prior to its mission



On Baengnyeong island, the northernmost point of South Korea, an M-48 Patton tank sits on a high point

communist bloc. North Korea's vitally strategic position as a bulwark against the US in East Asia allowed him to be particularly duplicitous.

After the Sino-Soviet split during the 1960s, Kim initially sided with Chairman Mao Zedong against the Soviets. Maoism fell out of favour after 1966 when China was seized by the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution: North Korea's 'Great Leader' feared and detested the youthful fanaticism of Mao's Red Guards and they returned the compliment, describing him as a "fat counter-revolutionary pig."

But by the 1970s, North Korea adopted a policy of equidistance between the two communist giants. Moreover, by then 'Marxist' and 'Leninist' jargon had served its purpose. By the drafting of the 1972 constitution, both words would disappear from official documents.

Two years before, a home-grown ideology called Juche (self-reliance) had been adopted as North Korea's 'sole guiding principle' at the Fifth Party Congress of the Korean Workers' Party. Much of it was rooted in Confucianism, the guiding philosophy of Korea's Chosun Dynasty (1392-1910). Both extolled a divine ruler, familial hierarchy, a controlled economy and hostility to foreign contamination.

As ruler, Kim's legitimacy was based on two falsehoods. First, he claimed to have led the resistance to the 1910-45 Japanese occupation, when in fact the resistance comprised multiple factions and ideologies: Kim's partisans were semi-gangsters whose biggest victory was to occupy a town of 1,400 houses for 24 hours. The second was that he led North Korea to a glorious victory by 1953. The 'Heroic Fatherland Liberation War' had ended in stalemate with the peninsula in ruins and the annexation of the South a failure. Kim's armies had been rescued from certain annihilation by the intervention of the Chinese in 1950. But by providing an ancient cultural framework for a modern state, Juche appealed

to a proud people who felt humiliated by the Japanese occupation and traumatised by the American-led war.

## A second war in Korea

Central to Juche doctrine is an uncompromising hostility towards the 'puppet regime' in South Korea. If each of the three Kims has been the only legitimate ruler of the Korean race, then no accommodation with another Korea is possible. To do so would be to invalidate Juche and invite overthrow of the regime.

Boasts of 'self reliance' may strike outsiders as absurd, given North Korea's reliance on the largesse of other communist states. From 1948-84, Moscow and Beijing bankrolled the economy to the tune of \$2.2 billion and \$900 million respectively. The bombed-out city of Hamhung was practically rebuilt by East Germans in the 1950s.

But the last Chinese soldiers had left North Korea by 1958. By contrast, 28,000 US troops attached to US Forces Korea (USFK) remain in South Korea to this day, most them at the Yongsan Garrison in central Seoul. By the following year, Kim had purged the party of any members with links to China or the Soviet Union: about 80,000 people are estimated to have vanished in this crackdown.

As a response to the American deployment of nuclear weapons in South Korea, the North began a massive programme of underground building, deploying more forces close to the DMZ. Kim's 'Four Military Lines' policy, adopted in the early 1960s, anticipated a collapse of the armistice. Accordingly, the whole population was expected to partake in a massive defensive war: every district was ordered to stockpile enough food and weapons to sustain a high-intensity conflict for three months.

By 1965, Kim had asked for Mao's backing in another strike against the South. Mao declined – and would do so again in 1975 – so Kim

looked further south for inspiration. In Vietnam, the old enemy was becoming embroiled in a military quagmire. Elite South Korean Marines were also being diverted there to combat highly motivated guerrillas, fighting under a communist flag, whose insurgency might provide the template for a second Korean War.

On 5 October 1966, Kim gave a speech in which he challenged the legitimacy of the armistice. Weeks later, the first of numerous clashes involving ROKA and USFK troops against KPA infiltrators took place.

Today, South Korea's economy is estimated to be 38 times the size of its northern rival. But in the 1960s, with an economy based on heavy industry, North Koreans actually had higher living standards. South Korea was corrupt and impoverished, ruled by the military strongman Park Chung-hee. If popular discontent against Park could be augmented by a peasants' war in the countryside, Kim surmised, then the KPA soldiers that one day streamed south would be welcomed as liberators.

But a protracted communist insurgency in South Korea faced a number of problems. The topography of the south was largely flat and given over to farmland, presenting far less protection against helicopter-mobile soldiers than the mountains and jungle canopy of Indochina. Plus, a Viet Cong-style insurrection would have little popular support among a civilian population with relatively fresh memories of the massacres committed by the KPA after its 1950 invasion.

In October-November 1968, roughly 120 KPA commandoes landed on South Korea's north-east coast with the objective of building bases for guerrilla war in the Taebaek Mountains that form the eastern spine of Korea. Almost all of them were soon killed or captured. The night of the YS-11 hijacking, 11 December 1969, more than 100,000 South Koreans marched through Seoul, some burning effigies of Kim Il-sung.

# Weapons that worry the West

North Korea is impoverished and has endured one of the worst famines of recent years, but its military arsenal is still lethal



## KN-08 MISSILE

Also known as the Nodong-C and Hwasong-13, this is a road-mobile Intercontinental Ballistic Missile, although it is not known if it has the capacity to carry a nuclear warhead yet. On 10 October, a newer version was believed to have been paraded through Pyongyang. The shortened nosecone may be indicative of a guidance system based on Russian technology.

## KOKSAN ARTILLERY PIECE

A 170mm self-propelled howitzer, the Koksan can fire four rounds in the first one minute and then one round every three minutes thereafter. With a 37-mile range, it would be capable of hitting Seoul from the DMZ and causing massive casualties in an all-out attack.



## SANG-O MIDGET SUBMARINE

Capable of ambushing southern naval vessels, the Sang-O is equipped with four torpedo tubes and can carry up to 16 mines. One was found beached at Gangneung as part of an attempted infiltration of the South in 1996. A longer version called the K-300 was identified in 2011.



## Land, Air and Sea

The 1966-69 border conflict ultimately failed to turn South Korea into a second Vietnam-type quagmire, a failure Kim himself acknowledged in late 1968 when he executed several of his leading generals and his Minister of Defence. But in three years, 299 ROKA and 43 USFK soldiers were killed in clashes along the DMZ together with several hundred KPA. The joint chiefs of staff designated the area north of the River Imjin and south of the DMZ a hostile fire zone while the USFK commander authorised some special forces to be diverted to ROKA.

The conflict culminated in an attempt by North Korean soldiers to assassinate President Park in Seoul and the almost year-long captivity of the USS Pueblo crew. By the end of 1969, however, tensions had diffused although incidents continued during the 1970s and 1980s, such as the discovery of four North Korean tunnels under the DMZ. The third of these, discovered in October 1978, is only 44 kilometres from Seoul. Upon discovery, the North Koreans claimed to be drilling for coal, despite the tunnel walls being made of granite. Other tunnels are believed to exist that could facilitate a ground invasion of the south.

Numerous incidents have taken place in the skies since 1958, including the shooting down of military craft and the hijacking of civilian aircraft by North Korean agents. The most recent took place in April 2014 when an unidentified drone aircraft was discovered on the South Korean island of Baengnyeong.

Korea's two navies have clashed intermittently since at least 1970 particularly over the issue of the NLL, which the north disputes. In 2010, the sinking of the Cheonan and shelling of Yeonpyeong Island formally ended a long period of inter-Korean engagement known as the 'Sunshine Policy'.

## Trustpolitik

The DMZ, for the foreseeable future, is unlikely to witness instability on the scale of 1966-69, although land and naval clashes will probably still occur. Kim Jong-un is almost certainly aware that any attempt to restart the 1950-53 war would end very badly; the destruction of his regime would be guaranteed within weeks at most and he himself would probably perish along with his family, incinerated by US-fired 'bunker buster' bombs.

Even so, his arsenal of non-conventional weapons together with elite KPA units, perhaps emerging from undiscovered tunnels, would cause chaos in the meantime.

Today, two Korean premiers face each other across the DMZ. Ironically, one is the grandson of Kim Il-sung, Stalin's Korean protégé. The other is the daughter of Park Chung-hee, the American-backed dictator credited with turning South Korea into an economic powerhouse. Since her 2012 election, Park Guen-hye has committed herself to a posture called 'trustpolitik', which includes renewed engagement with the North. For the time being, the rare wildlife of the DMZ seems safe.

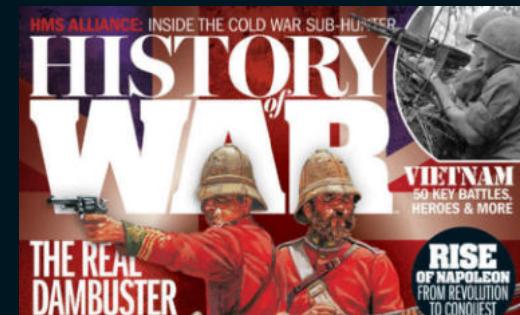




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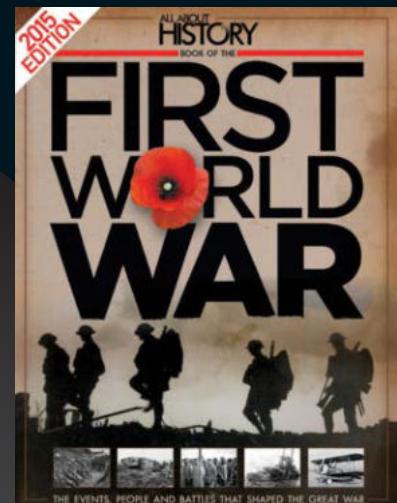
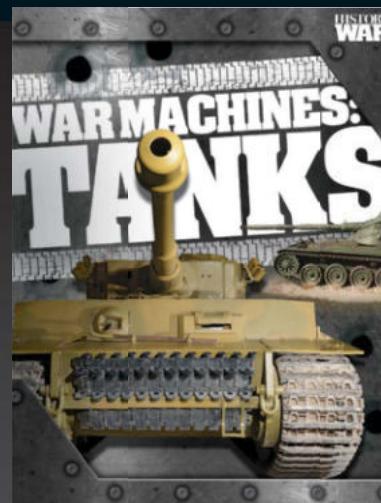
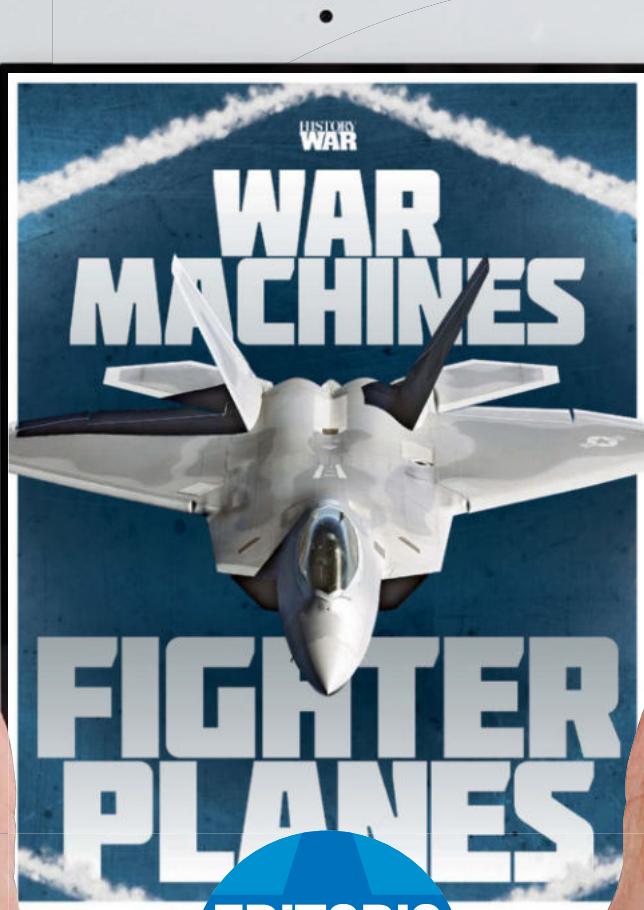


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# BLACKBURN



**Right:** The Buccaneer was typically active in the North Sea area during its service

With a distinguished career spanning several decades, the Buccaneer was one of the RAF's most effective strike jets

**O**riginally designed as a low-level strike and reconnaissance aircraft for carrier-borne operations, the Blackburn Buccaneer served on aircraft carriers with Britain's Fleet Air Arm for several years and was pressed into service with the Royal Air Force after the controversial cancellation of the TSR2 project.

The Buccaneer had a long service career, participating in all of the conflicts that British armed forces have been involved in until its retirement in 1994. At its high point, more than 100 Buccaneers served in the Royal Air Force. The aircraft was also supplied to the South African Air Force, where it was used for close air support in the Border Wars with Angola.

Following World War II, the Royal Navy became worried at the rapid expansion of the Soviet navy. The Russian introduction of very fast battle cruisers of similar design to the German pocket battleships of World War II was of great concern, as these new Soviet battleships were fast, highly manoeuvrable and would be a huge threat to Atlantic shipping in the event of an armed conflict. Rather than try to match the capability with expensive ship-building, in 1952 the decision was taken to design a fast, low-level strike aircraft capable of operating from aircraft carriers and delivering a large, sometimes nuclear, payload to strike against the Soviet navy.

## BLACKBURN BUCCANEER S2

**CREW:** 2 (PILOT AND OBSERVER)  
**LENGTH:** 63FT 5IN (19.33M)  
**WINGSPAN:** 44FT (13.41M)  
**HEIGHT:** 16FT 3IN (4.97M)  
**POWERPLANT:** 2 x ROLLS-ROYCE SPEY MK 101 TURBOFANS, 11,100LBF (49KN) EACH  
**MAX SPEED:** 645MPH (560KN, 1,074KM/H) AT 200FT (60M)  
**RANGE:** 2,300MI (2,000NMI, 3,700KM)  
**HARDPOINTS:** 4 x UNDER-WING PYLON STATIONS, 1 x INTERNAL ROTATING BOMB BAY WITH A CAPACITY OF 12,000LB (5,443KG) AND PROVISIONS TO CARRY

**COMBINATIONS OF:**  
**ROCKETS:** 4 x MATRA ROCKET PODS WITH 18 x SNEB 68MM ROCKETS EACH  
**MISSILES:** 2 x AIM-9 SIDEWINDERS FOR SELF-DEFENCE OR 2 x AS-37 MARTEL MISSILES OR 4 x SEA EAGLE MISSILES  
**BOMBS:** VARIOUS UNGUIDED BOMBS, LASER-GUIDED BOMBS, AS WELL AS THE RED BEARD OR WE.177 TACTICAL NUCLEAR BOMBS

**Below:** The Buccaneer was built to take off in the arduous maritime environment



# BUCCANEER S2

WORDS &amp; IMAGES NEILL WATSON



*Left: Folding wings were part of the original Fleet Air Arm requirement*

*Below: The piping for the bleed-air system can be seen when the Buccaneer's wings are folded*

**"AT ITS HIGH POINT, MORE THAN 100 BUCCANEERS SERVED IN THE ROYAL AIR FORCE"**





## DESIGN

The requirement was for a fast, jet-powered attack aircraft capable of flying slow enough to land on an aircraft carrier but also fast enough and with enough payload to fight against Soviet military shipping. This was a difficult task, as in 1952, jet technology was in its infancy.

Blackburn Aircraft won the contract with the Buccaneer S1, introduced in 1963. Its design had folding wings for storage on board, an arrestor hook for landings, plus a huge tail-mounted air brake to aid handling at low speeds. In addition, the Buccaneer employed an aerodynamic

technique known as 'flap blowing'. Bleed air was taken from the jet engines and blown over areas of the wings and flight-control surfaces to improve lift and enable the aircraft to respond better at low speeds. The piping for the bleed-air system can be seen inside of the wing structure when the aircraft has the wings folded. At the time, this technique, called Boundary Layer, was at the cutting edge of aerodynamics.

The initial S1 was underpowered, and while the aircraft had a good payload, an engine failure while at low speed landing or taking

off from a carrier was disastrous. To solve the issue, the S2 was developed with more powerful Rolls-Royce Spey engines. This aircraft had 40 per cent more power and significantly better fuel economy and went on to be highly successful until retirement in 1994.

The Buccaneer also featured an all-weather capability, something that was rare at the time. Early generation electronic flight systems controls, coupled with nose-mounted on-board radar, gave the aircraft the capability to fly at very low levels and high speeds in bad weather.

## POWERPLANT

The S1 Buccaneer was powered by the early generation De Havilland Gyron turbojet engine, delivering 7,100 pounds of thrust. With this power, the aircraft could not lift a full fuel tank as well as a full weapon load. In order to operate from aircraft carriers, the S1 had to take off with minimum fuel and then rendezvous with an in-flight refuelling aircraft to take on full fuel. Clearly, this was an inefficient system that had to be rectified.

The S2 was a modified Buccaneer with the Rolls-Royce Spey engine, significantly more powerful and giving the aircraft far greater versatility. The new engines required some modifications to the aircraft structure including the air intakes, but proved to be highly successful.

*The back-seat crewman was responsible for weapons systems and navigation and had a separate windscreen in the event of canopy jettison*



## ARMAMENT

Originally designed to deliver a nuclear weapon at Soviet warships, the diversity of the Buccaneer payloads over the years is symptomatic of the political attitude towards military spending of the time. The original weapon in the design was to be the 'Green Cheese' air-launched nuclear missile. However, the development programme for the missile was cancelled, meaning that the Buccaneer first flew with the unguided 20-kiloton Red Beard bomb.

The aircraft had a fully concealed bomb bay to give it a high cruise speed at low level. This meant

## "SPECIAL ROTATING BOMB BAY DOORS WERE DESIGNED TO OPEN UP TO THE MAXIMUM SPEED OF THE AIRCRAFT AT 0.9 MACH"

that special rotating bomb bay doors were designed to open up to the maximum speed of the aircraft at 0.9 mach. The large weapons bay could also carry a range of other payloads, including conventional non-nuclear bombs. At the time it joined the Royal Navy, it could carry any payload that the navy had available. Early in its career, the Buccaneer carried conventional bombs against shipping, but this was considered hazardous, as the low-level capability

had to be sacrificed to climb and deliver the bombs. Eventually, the aircraft were upgraded to carry the stand-off capability Sea Eagle missile.

Buccaneers could also carry a photo-reconnaissance pod, plus a large ferry tank for positioning flights across the globe. Under-wing hardpoints could carry weapons. Laser designator systems extended the life of the aircraft, which often flew alongside the newer Tornado in support.



*The original Buccaneer was designed for nuclear weapons delivery*



*A test shot of a Red Beard bomb, the first British tactical nuclear weapon*

Both crew members sat on early generation Martin Baker ejection seats. Early jet era instrumentation could be haphazard in layout



## COCKPIT

The crew of two flew in a tandem cockpit configuration, seated in early generation Martin Baker ejection seats. The combination of early generation electronic weapons technology and mechanical flight instruments made the cockpit layout a little haphazard at first glance. No modern heads-up displays were available at this time, meaning the pilot had to look inside for all instrument displays.

The rear-seat crew member operated the weapons and, later, electronic countermeasures, plus the nose-mounted radar and weapons-control systems. A large single-piece canopy covered the crew. This could be jettisoned in the event of ejection, with the rear-seat crewman having an additional windscreen for protection against the high-speed air blast.





*Below, left to right:*  
The pilot's joystick operated hydraulically boosted flying surfaces

Early jet cockpits had no heads-up display. The second airspeed indicator aided carrier landings

Cold War jet cockpits were designed for functionality above all else



*In the first Gulf War, Buccaneers were repainted and re-equipped in just 72 hours for a desert warfare role*



## ROLES AND DIVERSITY

While the Buccaneer was effective in its original role as a fast maritime strike aircraft, it is perhaps best known as a Royal Air Force jet. Blackburn originally proposed the aircraft to the RAF as a replacement to the Canberra. The Royal Air Force insisted that their new jet had to be supersonic, so the Buccaneer was discounted. However, at this time, in the mid 1960s, there was much political upheaval in the procurement of military equipment, with spending cuts, inter-force distrust and rivalry as the British Army, Navy and Air Force each fought to defend their budgets and capability.

With the controversial cancellation of the TSR2 project, the Blackburn offer was revisited. Additionally, the controversial 1957 White Paper on defence spending called for the retirement of Navy aircraft carriers, with the Royal Air Force tasked with assuming the capability of striking against maritime targets.

While the RAF may have been reluctant to take the Buccaneer, it proved to be a very useful

asset. As the Panavia Tornado programme was delayed, it continued to serve a useful role. Even after the introduction of the Tornado, it continued to fly missions. Probably the most famous was the rapid deployment at short notice in the 1991 Gulf War. Re-equipped and repainted in desert camouflage in less than 72 hours, the Buccaneers flew with laser designation guidance systems. Flying alongside two Tornados, the Buccaneer used the laser to 'designate' the target for the smart bomb that was then delivered by the Tornado.

This teamwork delivered a huge amount of damage to bridges and other infrastructure. Additionally, Buccaneers delivered their own weapons, one such mission managing to hit two Iraqi aircraft while still taxiing on the ground.

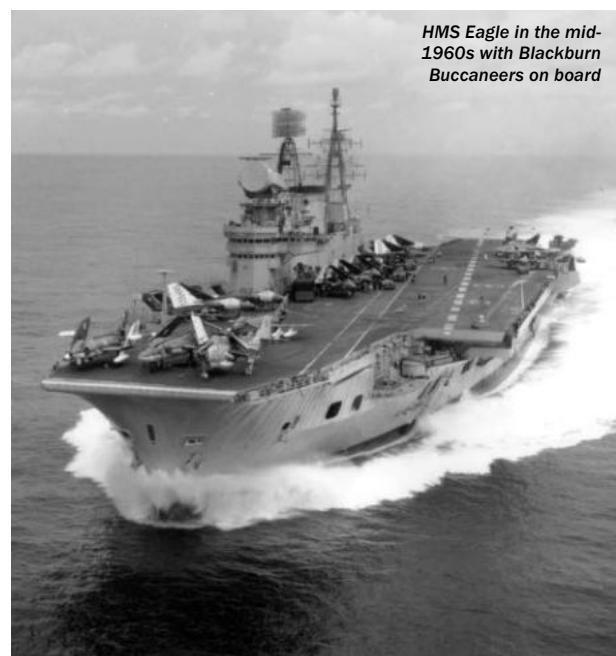
Despite the introduction of more modern aircraft alongside it, including the Harrier and the Jaguar, the Buccaneer continued to play a very cost-effective and useful role amid the constantly changing political backdrop of the 1957 White Paper, the end of the Cold War and the subsequent 1991 Gulf War.

## TECH STATS

The particular aircraft in these photographs is XN974, the very first production S2 Buccaneer. This aircraft was sent to the Royal Aeronautical Establishment for trials and testing and then on to HMS Eagle for sea trials. It then flew to the USA, where it was used in Nevada for hot-weather testing.

XN974 was used continually throughout its life as a development test bed. As the political and military climate changed, weapons systems were introduced and new electric warfare systems designed, this aircraft was used for testing the systems before they went live with frontline squadrons. It is preserved in ground running condition at Yorkshire Air Museum, where it is often seen taxiing on the runways at events.

*HMS Eagle in the mid-1960s with Blackburn Buccaneers on board*



# BOOK REVIEWS

**History of War's** pick of the newest military history titles waiting for you on the shelves

## MADNESS IN MOGADISHU

**Writer:** Lt Col Michael Whetstone, USA (Ret) **Publisher:** Stackspole Books **Price:** £19.99 **Released:** Out Now

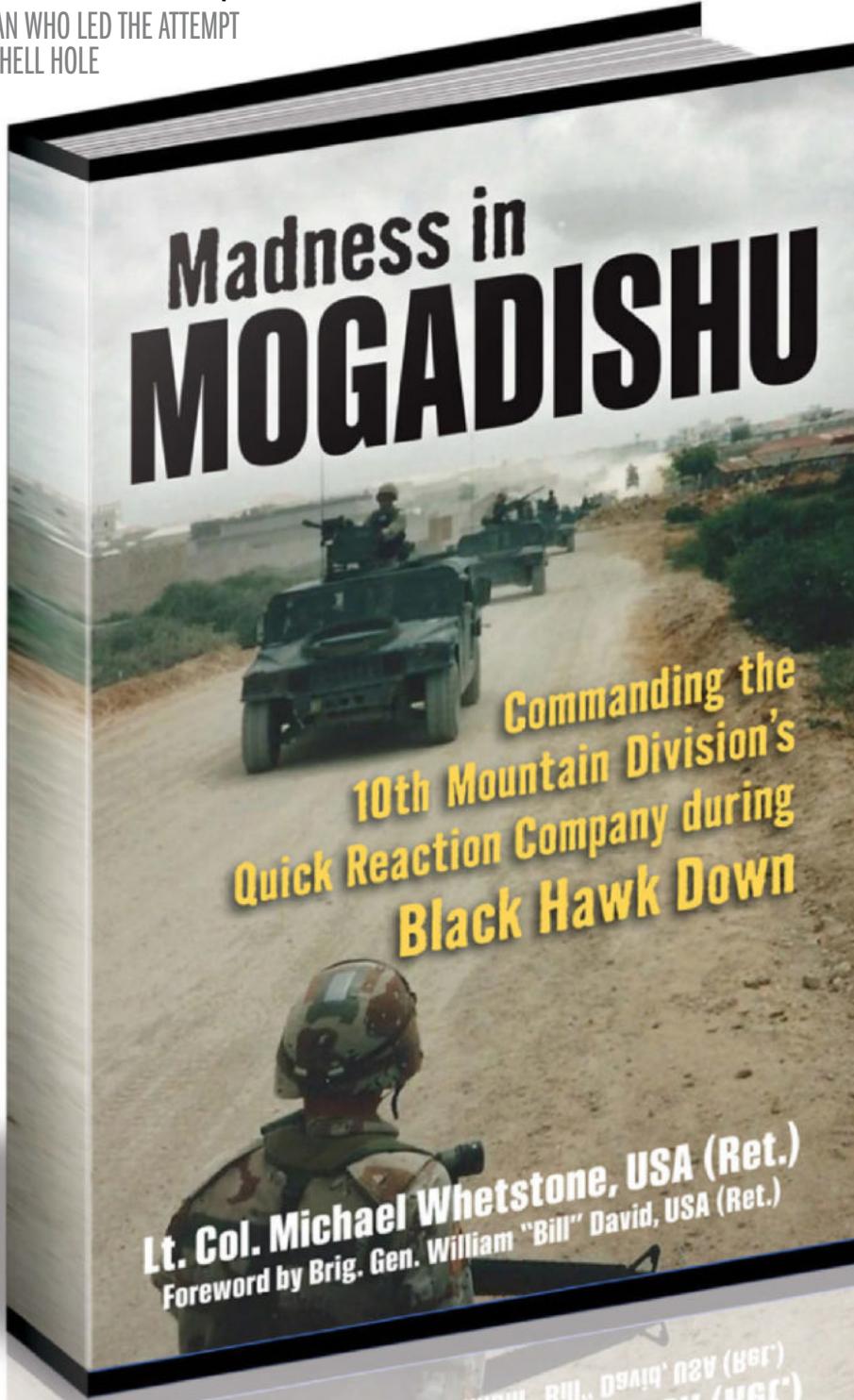
REAL-LIFE ACTION-MOVIE HEROICS RECALLED BY THE MAN WHO LED THE ATTEMPT TO SAVE US SPECIAL FORCES STRANDED IN AN AFRICAN HELL HOLE

Anyone who has seen Ridley Scott's 2002 film *Black Hawk Down* will be familiar with the story that this book tells. On 3 October 1993, US Special Forces were flown into Mogadishu with orders to seize two high-ranking faction leaders. At that time, Somalia was two years into its civil war, and the US military were lead players in a UN mission to help bring an end to the conflict. The raid, however, went badly wrong. Two of the Special Forces' Black Hawk helicopters were brought down by ground fire. Some on board were killed, and the survivors mounted a desperate defence against thousands of local militiamen who began closing in all around them.

The man who was then sent to rescue those troops is the author of this book, and it is the first time this familiar tale has been told from the perspective of the rescue party. Retired army colonel Michael Whetstone was then a young captain commanding the 10th Mountain Company's Quick Reaction Company. His book vividly and viscerally recounts how he led his men and their vehicles through the labyrinthine streets towards the crash sites under almost constant fire from machine guns, small arms and RPGs. It took them 16 hours to fight their way to their objective, only to discover when they got there that they were too late to save their comrades. Battered, bloodied and exhausted, they then had to fight their way back to safety.

Whetstone tells his story well. He puts the reader next to him in the sweat-soaked Humvee as the bullets rattle down, while revealing himself to be a man drenched in the language and ideology of the modern US military machine. After his tale is told, the book then morphs into what practically amounts to a combat-management self-help manual, as he examines what he as a military commander had learned from the experience.

The First Battle of Mogadishu, as this notorious encounter became known, was immediately painted by the State Department's PR machine as some sort of victory. The Hollywood version of the battle then echoed that interpretation with chest-thumping pride, and sadly this book does little to challenge that perception. In reality, what happened in Mogadishu was a pyrrhic victory at best for the US, while their overall mission in Somalia was an abject failure.



# GREAT BATTLES – HATTIN

**Writer:** John France **Publisher:** Oxford University Press **Price:** £18.99 **Released:** Out now

HOW SALADIN'S DEVASTATING VICTORY OVER THE CRUSADERS CAME TO PLAY ITS PART IN GLOBAL HISTORY RIGHT UP TO 9/11 AND BEYOND

If you're after an in-depth study of The Battle of Hattin written from a military point of view – armies, tactics, weaponry etc – this is not the book for you. John France's new study on the subject is more interested in exploring how the famous 12th-century battle fits into the grand sweep of history.

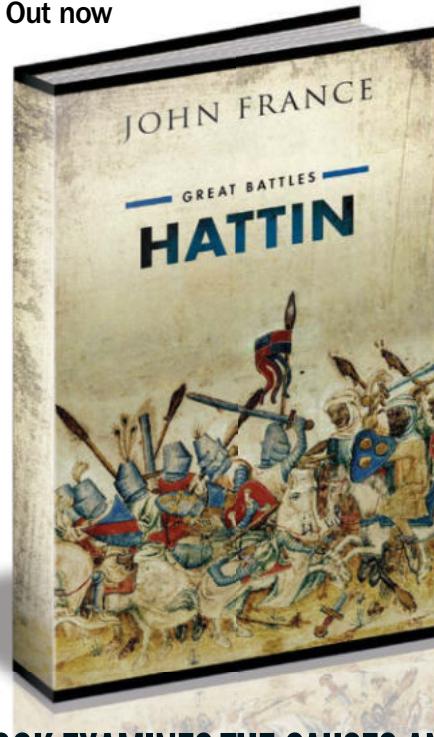
The Battle of Hattin was one of the Medieval world's true earthquake moments. Taking place on 4 July 1187, it saw Muslim leader Saladin destroy the Crusader Army of the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem, slaughtering or capturing about 17,000 of its 20,000 men. As a battle, it was notable for the tactical ingenuity employed by Saladin in defeating his Christian opponents – he lured them into open country, lit fires to make the desert air even more arid, then cut them off from any water supply before abruptly finishing them off. Its aftershock, however, was to prove even more powerful.

With such a huge Crusader force crushed, the Christian grip on Jerusalem and the enclave they controlled around it was broken, and the lands were soon claimed in the name of Islam. Although a century of even more intensified Holy wars – a period of violent push and shove between Crusades and Jihad – would follow,

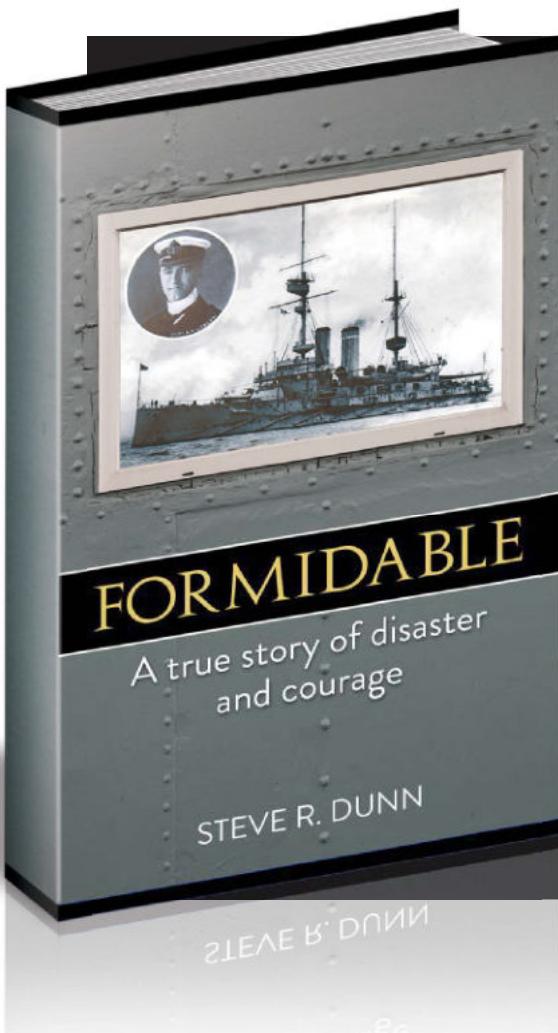
the slaughter at Hattin effectively marked the beginning of the end of European Christian colonisation in the Middle East.

France's highly accessible book examines the causes and consequences of this seismic moment, tracing its impact way beyond its immediate aftermath and impact on Euro-Islamic relations. He follows the path of its tremors all the way up to the 9/11 terrorist attacks, and the uneasy relationship between Eastern Islamic culture and Western Christian culture that still exists today. Along the way he shows how Hattin has been used by successive Islamic causes – from pan-Arab Nationalists to Wahhabist fanatics like Bin Laden – as an inspiration and rallying point.

The book's scope is hugely ambitious given how slender it is – the argument is made in 160-odd pages – and maybe comes across a little more like a university thesis than a significant examination of the battle itself. That said, if you want to understand a little more about how the current tension between East and West is rooted deep in our shared and bloody past, this is a good place to start.



**“FRANCE'S HIGHLY ACCESSIBLE BOOK EXAMINES THE CAUSES AND CONSEQUENCES OF THIS SEISMIC MOMENT, TRACING ITS IMPACT WAY BEYOND ITS IMMEDIATE AFTERMATH”**



# FORMIDABLE

**Writer:** Steven R Dunn **Publisher:** The Book Guild Ltd

**Price:** £12.99 **Released:** Out now

A REMARKABLE TALE OF THE DEMISE OF A GREAT SHIP AND THE MEN THAT SAILED WITH IT

On 1 January 1915, the Royal Navy Cruiser HMS Formidable was scything through the waves of the English Channel, its 780 sailors blissfully unaware of the enemy lurking below. At 2.20am, U-24, a German submarine, under Kapitanleutnant Rudolph Schneider, unleashed a 362-pound torpedo. So began a story of enormous human tragedy and selfless courage.

The horrifying scale of the disaster that befell Captain Noel Loxley and his men on that black New Year's Day is masterfully recounted by author Steven R Dunn through the eyes and ears of the sailors who witnessed it. An inescapable sense of pity for the loss of 583 souls quickly transforms into a growing contempt for the ignorant naval leaders, notably Admiral Sir Lewis Bayly, who could have done so much more to prevent it. The fact that Formidable was not fitted with 'torpedo bulges' – steel protrusions designed to absorb the initial impact of enemy fire – seems utterly ludicrous to the contemporary reader.

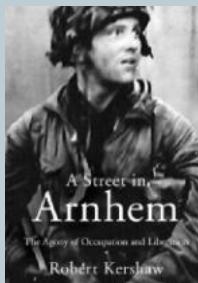
Dunn's superbly researched account is also a testament to the human capacity for courage and selflessness. Captain Loxley is rightly hailed for his bravery and concern for his men and the ships sent to aid them. Touchingly, Dunn does not forget to include the loyal dogs also on board.

As it finally slips below the waves following a second torpedo hit, Dunn moves on to the aftermath in Britain as the truth emerged and families received that most feared of letters. It makes for an exemplary account of naval warfare.

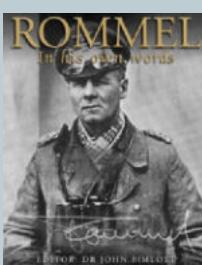
# ALL ABOUT HISTORY

## RECOMMENDED READING

### A STREET IN ARNHEM: THE AGONY OF OCCUPATION AND LIBERATION



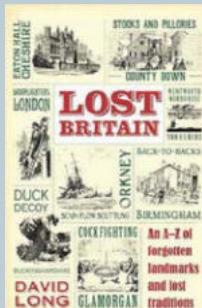
In a refreshing approach that explores the concepts of family, community and solidarity during war, Robert Kershaw provides an emotional and incredibly insightful account of World War II through the eyes of the inhabitants of a single street, and the soldiers fighting a devastating war.



### ROMMEL: IN HIS OWN WORDS

Collecting together letters, dispatches and images, Dr John Pimlott presents a frank and detailed look into the man who was regarded by both

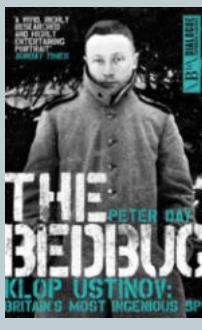
sides as a chivalrous and honourable leader. Boasting more than 120 photographs, many taken by Rommel, this work helps us get inside the mind of the man himself.



### LOST BRITAIN

In this charming and fascinating look into the long history of Great Britain, David Long delves into the traditions and landmarks of a nation lost in time. With facts broken down into bite-size chunks and a wealth of imagery

included, *Lost Britain* is easy to dip in and out of and doesn't disappoint.



### THE BEDBUG

In his meticulously researched account, Peter Day sets out to tell the story of Klop Ustinov, the spy nicknamed 'the Bedbug' due to his ability to hop into the bed of any woman he chose. Ustinov's fascinating life is charted from birth to his eventual position as

one of the most influential Allied spies of World War II in this informative book.

# IN SEARCH OF ALFRED THE GREAT

**Writers:** Edoardo Albert And Katie Tucker **Publisher:** Amberley

**Price:** £9.99 **Released:** Out now

THE CAKE-BURNING KING WHO SAVED ENGLAND FROM VIKING RAIDERS GETS A DRAMATIC MAKE OVER FOR A NEW GENERATION OF READERS

This book is a collaboration between Edoardo Albert, a historian and who specialises in shining a light on the Dark Ages, and Dr Katie Tucker, a scientist at the University of Winchester who specialises in identifying and dating old bones.

It's an old bone that seems to have inspired this book. Namely the Miss Marple-esque discovery of an ancient piece of pelvis in a cardboard box that could have belonged to the only English monarch to ever have the epithet 'the Great' – not including the Danish Cnut. Unfortunately, the book isn't conclusive as to whether the bone was Alfred's, although as the good doctor points out in her fascinating chapters as she attempts to find out, it's certainly old enough and would have belonged to a man who'd have been the age Alfred was when he died – 59.

Although the scientist is unable to solve the mystery, the mere speculation is enough to allow the historian to at least re-examine one of history's most mysterious figures. This is something he does in a hugely entertaining way, dramatising the events of Alfred's action-packed life in a gripping style. For large parts of the narrative, this reads like a real-life *Game Of Thrones*.

The narrative opens in 878, with Alfred fleeing across his dark, frozen kingdom from the invading Viking leader Lord Guthrum, and continues at a pace with clanging swords, galloping horses and burning castles right up until Alfred's death 21 years later.

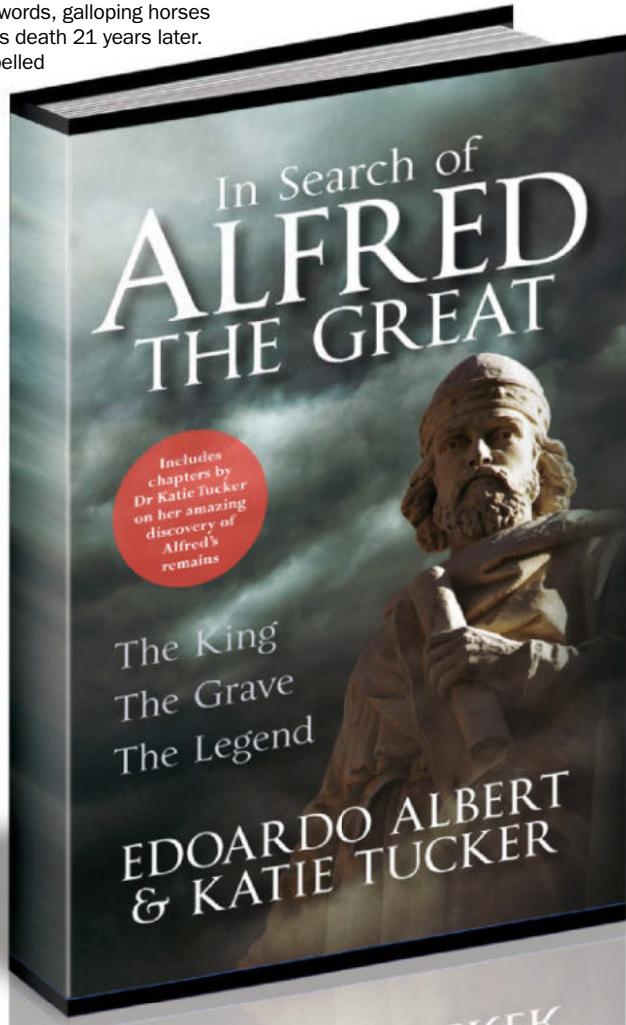
By this time, Alfred had successfully repelled

wave after wave of Viking attacks, possibly burned some cakes, effectively unified the people of England under his rule, established the foundations of the country's education system, undertaken extensive legal reforms, established the first English navy and created a network of land defences designed to repel invading armies. It's not surprising that he earned himself such a prestigious suffix as a result.

After his death, Alfred's bones were buried and disinterred on a number of occasions as his remains were moved around Winchester, until finally going missing sometime in the late 18th century when his grave was disturbed by building works. All of which is discussed in the latter stages of the book where Dr Tucker takes up the narrative.

While this book wouldn't tell anybody well acquainted with Alfred the Great's story anything new, it is a superb introduction to the subject, and one that is likely to inspire a deep and serious interest in one of history's most iconic and important characters.

**"ALTHOUGH THE SCIENTIST IS UNABLE TO SOLVE THE MYSTERY, THE MERE SPECULATION IS ENOUGH TO ALLOW THE HISTORIAN TO AT LEAST RE-EXAMINE ONE OF HISTORY'S MOST MYSTERIOUS FIGURES"**



# 47 ROYAL MARINE COMMANDO

## AN INSIDE STORY 1943-1946

**Writer:** Marc De Bolster **Publisher:** Fonthill Media **Price:** £20 **Released:** Out Now

### FIRST-HAND ACCOUNTS FROM THE COMMANDOS WHO HELPED TO LIBERATE EUROPE

Following the evacuation of Dunkirk in the wake of the advancing Wehrmacht armies, Winston Churchill realised that if Britain was to carry on fighting, radical changes were needed. He called for the creation of small, highly trained raiding parties that could be deployed behind enemy lines. One such group was named the 47 Royal Marines Commando.

Using first-hand accounts from the veterans who invited him to become their official historian, Marc De Bolster tells the story of the Marines who landed on the beaches of Normandy on 6 June 1944 and marched on to fulfil a crucial role in the liberation of Europe.

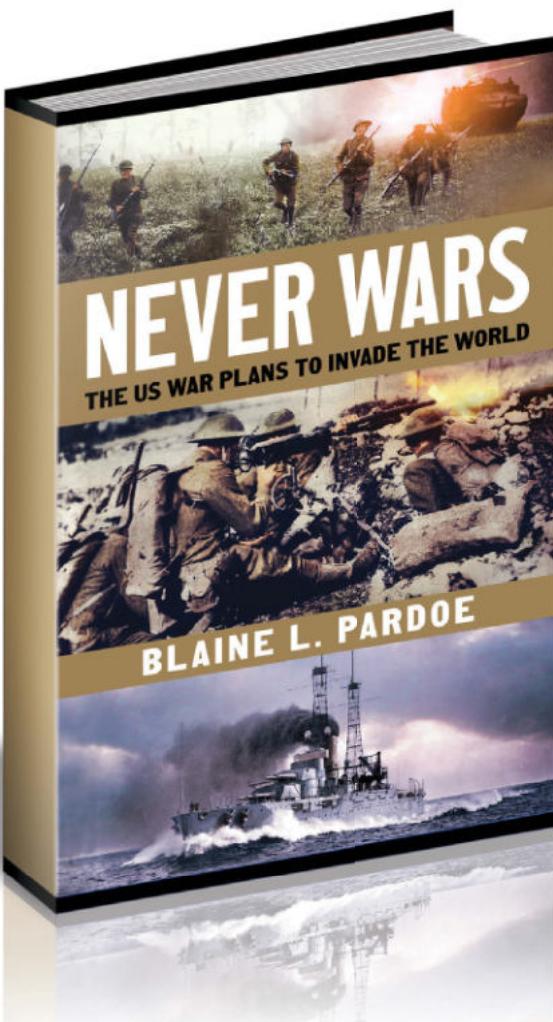
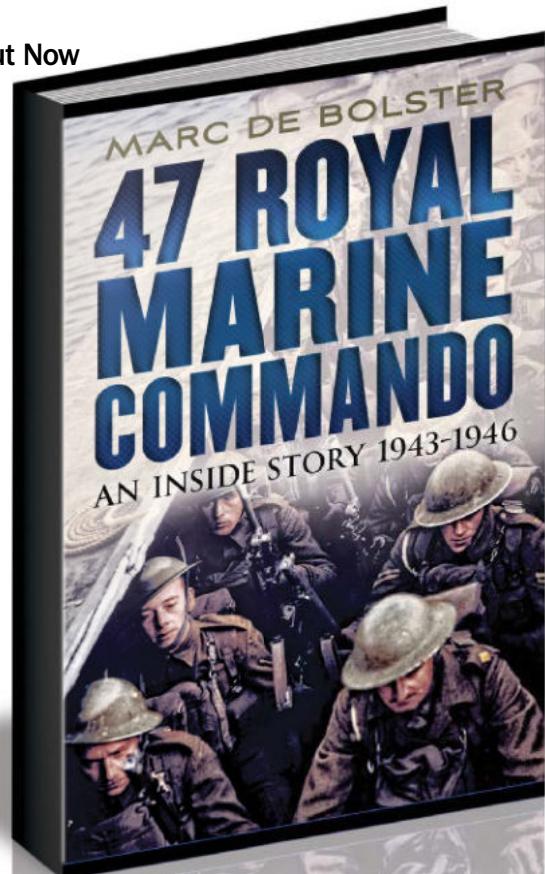
From its christening on 1 August 1943 (formerly the 10th Battalion) to the ferocious fighting throughout France and then Holland, De Bolster expertly utilises

the rare level of access he acquired to explore the exploits of these courageous few. His work is augmented with a plethora of photographs, from neat men in uniform to heavily burdened Marines disembarking from landing craft under enemy fire.

The raw, unvarnished recollections of the 47 Royal Marines are the stuff of every military historians' dreams – honest, brutal, and yet remarkably calm and even cheerful despite the harrowing events unfolding around them. One man was even heard to remark upon his concern that they were intruding on a private beach as he swam ashore on D-Day.

While the varied accounts often lead to sudden jolts in the narrative, and some of the minutiae surrounding uniforms and billeting are a little excessive, this is a fine testament to these courageous men.

**“HIS WORK IS AUGMENTED WITH A PLETHORA OF PHOTOGRAPHS, FROM NEAT MEN IN UNIFORM TO HEAVILY BURDENED MARINES DISEMBARKING FROM LANDING CRAFT UNDER ENEMY FIRE”**



# NEVER WARS

## THE US WAR PLANS TO INVADE THE WORLD

**Writer:** Blaine L Pardoe **Publisher:** Fonthill Media **Price:** £20 **Released:** Out Now

### THE REVELATORY HISTORY OF THE UNITED STATES' PLANS FOR GLOBAL CONQUEST

The United States of America has played a decisive role in some of the bloodiest conflicts of modern history. From the cratered fields of World War I to recent wars in the Middle East, the USA is unquestionably a super power. However, this was not always the case.

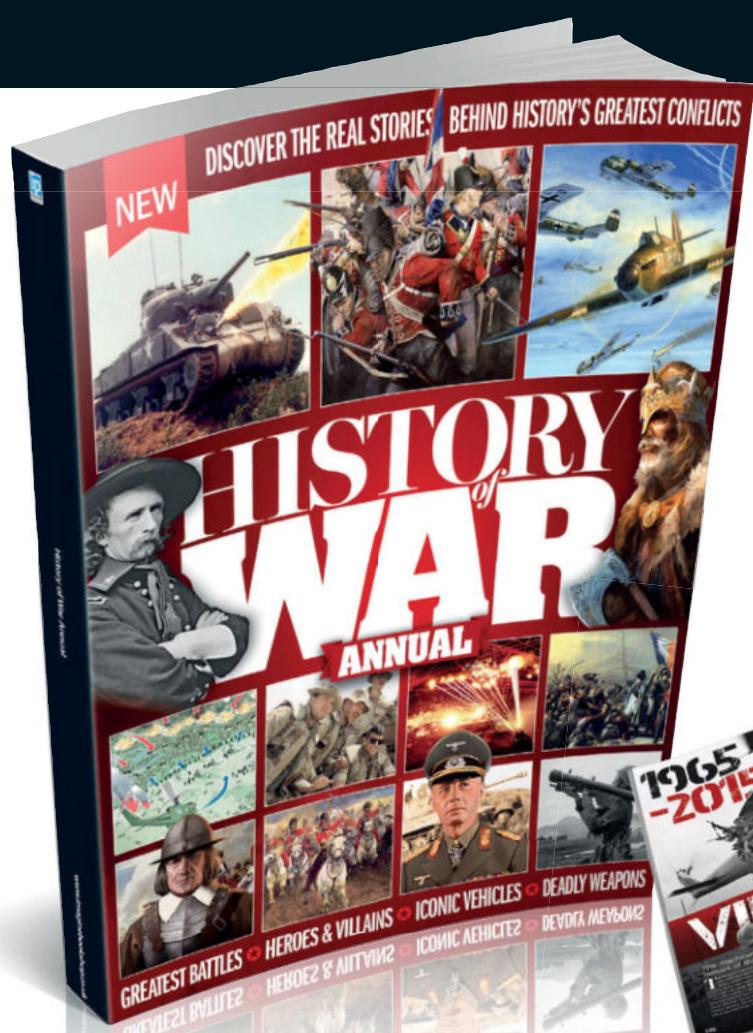
Never Wars is a breathtaking account of the various, and often fanciful, war plans that a fledgling USA conjured up as it sought to assert its dominance in a world at the behest of the vast British Empire and other emerging powers.

From the creation of the Joint Board (an effort to co-ordinate its army and naval force) to the respective war plans for the invasions of Mexico and Cuba (to name a few), Blaine L Pardoe provides a captivating insight into the USA's early military intentions.

While other plans, such as a clash with Germany in 1914, proved logical and ultimately prescient, the same cannot be said for the two proposed invasions of Canada, in 1905 and 1935, with a view to seizing British territories. Few modern readers will be aware of the staggering amount of resources dedicated to this incredible, not to mention dangerous, vision.

Pardoe peppers his hard-won findings with a variety of statistics, such as the man-power required for each campaign, without jeopardising a fluid, easy-going style. His analysis of the context in which these plans were made allows the reader a better understanding of why they were ever proposed. A thoroughly enjoyable read and one strongly recommended for all lovers of alternate history.

From the makers of **HISTORY OF WAR**

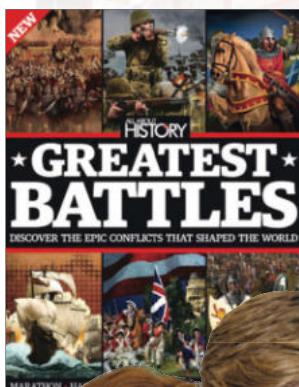


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# KING ERIK XIV'S PARADE ARMOUR

Sweden's troubled monarch commissioned this opulent suit as a show of strength and defiance

**T**his suit was commissioned in 1562, just two years after Erik ascended the throne after the death of his father, Gustav I Vasa. Decorating each of the 18 driven steel sections, as well as the accompanying shield, are grandiose depictions of battle scenes, prisoners being rounded up and mythological figures. This would seem to suggest strength, wealth and above all power – a symbol of the wearer's authority and status. However, in the mid-16th century, the Swedish monarchy itself was in a stage of flux. Erik's father had managed to break his country from its union with Denmark during his reign, but both the House of Vasa and the newly independent Sweden were still far from secure at his death.

Before ascending the throne, Erik had been busy wooing Elizabeth I of England, and was even on the point of embarking to court her in person when he was told of his father's death. Immediately, the prince was flung in to the midst of the ongoing struggle between the monarch and the Swedish nobility, which he fervently mistrusted.

1563 saw the beginning of the Nordic Seven Years' War, as Denmark sought to forcibly bring Sweden back under its control. As trophies and prisoners of war were paraded triumphantly through the streets of Stockholm, Erik appeared in this dazzling armour for all to see.

Before long, however, the cracks in this impressive façade began to show. The king's mistrust of the nobility soon turned into outright hostility and paranoia, and he descended into insanity, stalling the Swedish war effort.

Believing the aristocracy conspired against him, on 24 May 1567, Erik helped murder several members of the nobility, many of whom belonged to the ancient Sture family. It would prove to be the beginning of the end for the king, who was overthrown the following year. He would later be murdered by drinking poisoned pea soup.

*Left: Detail of the breastplate featuring Queens Lampedo and Marpesia, two figures from Greek and Roman mythology*



# NEVER OVER BY CHRISTMAS



## Henry V

Famous for his victory at Agincourt, 600 years ago in 1415. Shakespeare gave Henry these famously stirring lines at the siege of the fortress of Harfleur, in Normandy, earlier in the campaign.



## Winstanley

Gerrard Winstanley was one of the English Diggers. In the English Civil War they demanded the abolition of private property and encouraged the poor to reclaim the commons for the people.



## Avro 504

The Avro 504, a two-seater reconnaissance aircraft, through various models, was in service with the first Royal Flying Corps throughout World War One. The first RFC fatalities were the crew of an Avro 504.

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## The Desert Rats' Cromwell

A vehicle made famous by the British 7th Armoured Division, who had been dubbed the Desert Rats for their exploits in North Africa. However, the 7th Armoured were not issued with Cromwells until 1944, when they returned to the U.K. to prepare for D-Day. They fought in their Cromwells across France and into Germany, and eventually took part in the Victory Parade on September 7, 1945, in Berlin.

Development for the Cromwell first began in 1940 when the General Staff knew the Crusader would soon become obsolete. The tank was the fastest British tank to serve in the war, with a top speed of 40 mph (64 km/h). Its dual purpose 75 mm main gun had HE and armour-piercing capabilities and its armour ranged from 8 mm up to 76 mm overall.

In World of Tanks, you can command the Cromwell from the driver's seat. World of Tanks is an online PC game dedicated to tank warfare in the mid-20th century, with over 300 of history's most iconic tanks.

A variety of tiers, upgrades, equipment, and decals allow you to make each tank, your progression and your gameplay experience unique.

Play For Free at [Worldoftanks.eu](http://Worldoftanks.eu)

